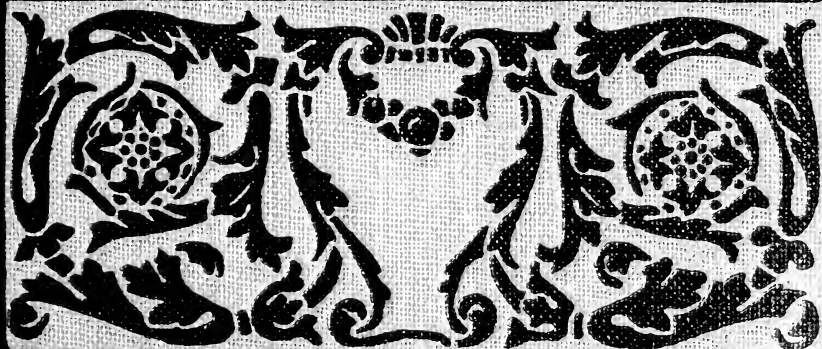
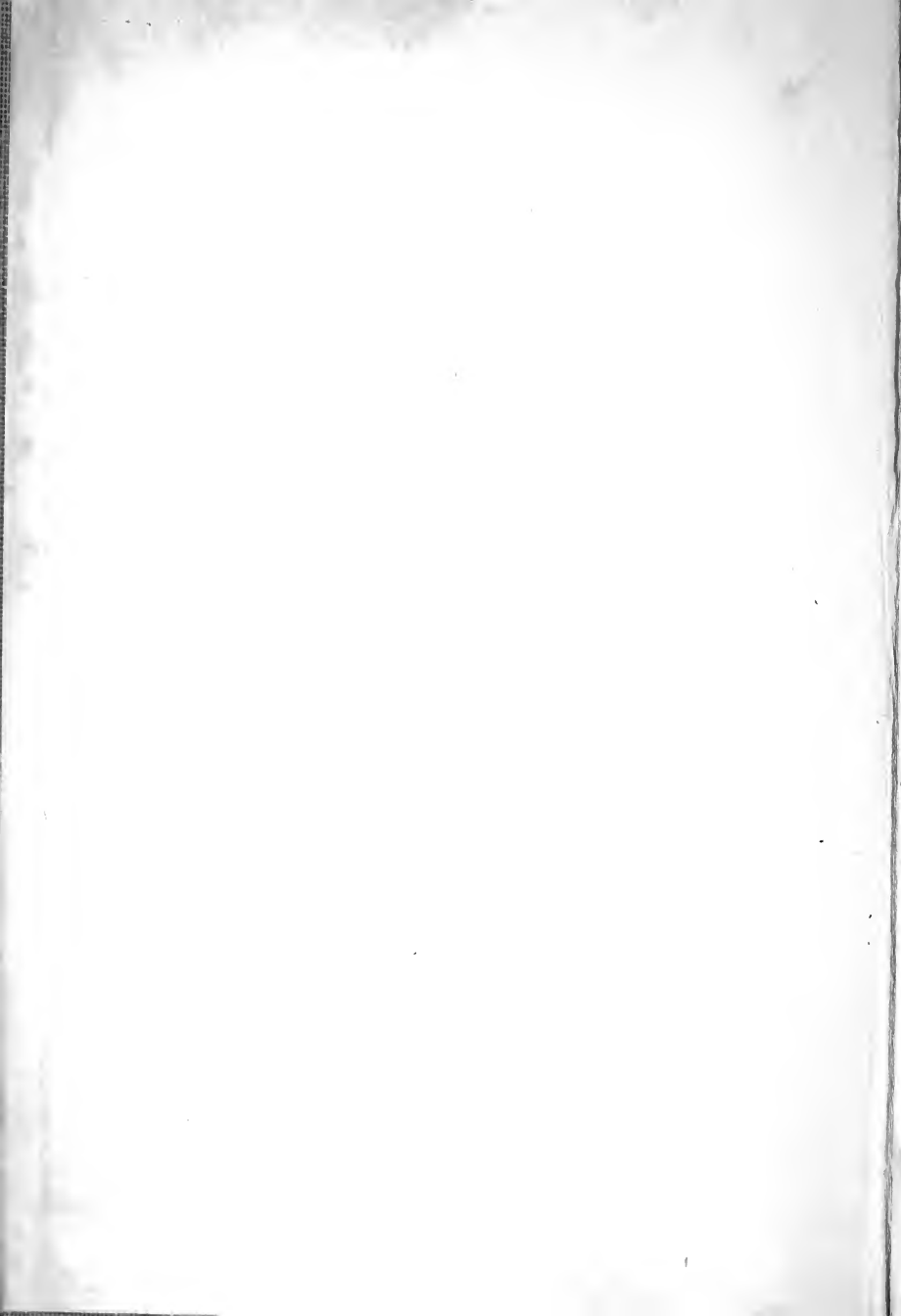


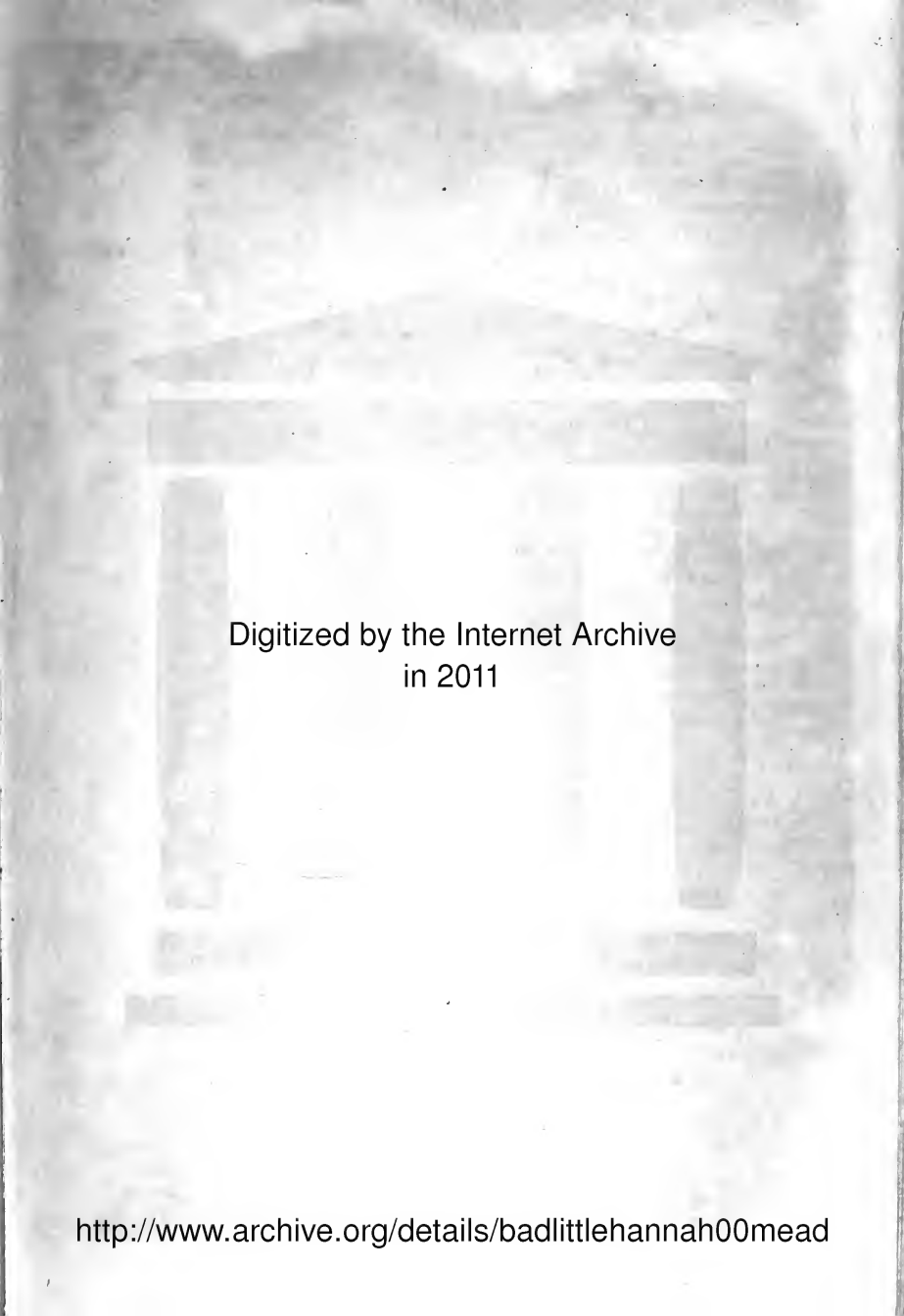
BAD LITTLE HANNAH



MRS. L. T. MEADE







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Bad Little Hannah

BY
MRS. L. T. MEADE

AUTHOR OF
"A Girl in Ten Thousand," "A Modern Tomboy,"
"The Time of Roses," "The School
Favorite," Etc.



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BAD LITTLE HANNAH

CHAPTER I.

HER GREAT NAUGHTINESS.

It was the youngest who gave all the trouble. She was only eight years old, and was still to all intents and purposes a nursery child; nevertheless she managed to keep the family in hot water from morning till night. Her name was Hannah, and she was decidedly plain. No one could imagine why it was in her power to direct the entire house, but such was a fact.

The Cardigans lived in a beautiful place called the Meadows, within sixty miles of town. The family consisted of a boy of sixteen called Kenneth, twin girls of between thirteen and fourteen years of age, called respectively Celia and Olivia, and then came the small bad child, Hannah. This was the family, as far as the children were concerned.

On the day on which this story opens Celia and Olivia were on the tiptoe of expectation. They were taught at home, and a new governess was expected. Her name was Margaret North. The girls thought it a very pretty

name, and speculated together as to what she would be like. Kenneth, who had just gone through measles at Eton, was home for change of air, and the girls thought they could consult him on the subject.

"She is coming by the five o'clock train," said Celia, "and the pony chaise, with old Daniel, has been sent to meet her. The cart has also gone for her luggage. She ought to be at the Meadows, if the train is punctual, soon after six o'clock. I feel desperately excited; don't you, Olivia?"

"So, so!" replied Olivia, yawning, and stooping down to caress a particularly fat pug.

"I am glad she is coming," said Kenneth. "I hope when she arrives that she'll make you mind your P's and Q's. My earnest prayer is that she may turn out stern, exacting, and as old-maid-like as possible. If she is, you will have a nice time, you two girls, and I shall be able to get a bit of fun out of her."

"What a nice, amiable sort of boy you are," said Celia, speaking in her most sarcastic tone. "Now look here, Kenneth, once for all; you must not tease Miss North. What a terrible life you led our last governess, poor Miss Fielding. But for you I really believe she would have been here still. She wasn't half bad, dear old soul. She was as easy-going as she could be, and always kept a novel hidden under the lesson books, so as to be able to dart down upon it when she had a spare moment. Didn't I bless that novel when I wasn't in the humor to study! Then on cold days she would sit with her feet on the fender by way of listening to us when we were reading

French aloud, but all the time she was devouring her novel. Catch her worrying us about our lessons! Whenever I wanted to have a day's rest I used to pretend I had a headache, and she let me off immediately. I am quite willing to confess that I used to have headaches pretty often last summer, and in consequence I had quite a jolly time, and never overexerted myself. Then, when I didn't know a particular lesson, I was always able to make up an excuse, and she never saw through me. She was fond of me, I think," continued Celia, getting sentimental. "But for you, Ken, and that awful lay figure which you dressed up and stuck in her room, Miss Fielding would have been with us now, and we shouldn't have had a care in the world; should we, Olivia?"

"Quite true," replied Olivia; "but I suppose the best of times must come to an end. If we are to take our places in society some day, we shall have to learn, and Miss North is to be the instrument to convey instruction to us. There! we trust she'll be nice; Margaret North has quite a pleasant sound."

"I don't care for the name," said Kenneth. "It is very stiff and stuck-up. I am prepared beforehand not to like her. I shan't like her, I don't intend to like her, I shall worry her life out. Now you know what is before you, girls."

"Come, Ken, none of your nonsense," said Olivia. "You'll be the very first to get under her influence; see if I'm not right."

"I'd like to find myself in such a position," replied Kenneth. "Look here, this is the sort of person she'll

be." As he spoke he took a pair of spectacles out of an old case which happened to be on the table, put them astride his nose, and began marching up and down the room.

"Behold the learned pedagogue!" he cried. "Here she is, in right good form. You, her pupils, must bow to her command."

With peals of laughter Celia rushed at him, snatched the spectacles from his nose, and inserted them once more in their case.

"Let us go to meet her," she exclaimed suddenly, "it is past five o'clock, and Daniel must be driving her home. Let us start at once; it is a lovely evening for a walk. Oh, by the way, Olivia, I have made her room so pretty—I put flowers on the mantelpieces and in the little glass in the center of her pin-cushion. Governesses always like these small attentions. Miss Fielding told me so once when she was in a confidential mood. She said they made all the difference between happiness and unhappiness. Fancy anyone talking in that sentimental way about a few flowers. Anyhow I thought of it this morning when I remembered Miss North was coming. Now, if we go to meet her, it may take off the awkwardness of her first arrival. You know mother is away, and she said before she left home this morning, 'Be sure you are nice to Miss North when she comes, and show her everything.'"

"Did you ask for a holiday?" cried Olivia eagerly. "We generally have a holiday the first day with a new governess. The very moment I see her I'll ask for a holiday. Did mother say anything about it to you, Celia?"

"No, nothing; but no doubt Margaret North will give it if we ask her; but I don't think I'd speak of it the *very* first thing."

"Ha! ha! he! he!" suddenly cried a shrill and childish voice, and Hannah, the reprobate of the house, tumbled into the middle of the room. There is no other possible way of expressing her advent. She came in head over heels, balancing herself deftly for a quarter of a minute on her extended arms, with her legs wabbling in the air; then she came head up, something like the well-known india-rubber toy, and gazed at her family with a scarlet face and eyes as blue as the sky.

Hannah was a large child with a broad expanse of face, well covered with a crop of freckles. Her intensely blue very wide-open eyes were her one beauty, otherwise she was plain of the plain; her hair was a sort of hay color and cut very short; it stuck up now wildly like a sort of halo round her heated face, her forehead was damp, and some little rings of hair clung to it; she had been running hard and was out of breath. On her person she wore a very dirty and much crumpled brown-holland overall—there were holes at the back of her stockings, and her boots were patched at the toes. It would have been difficult anywhere to see a more disreputable looking little girl.

"Ha! ha!" she repeated, as she flung herself full length on the carpet in front of her sisters and brother.

"Go away, Hannah, you have no business in the school-room; go away at once," said Celia.

"It is easy for you to talk, but not so easy to get me to obey," said Hannah in her terse style. "Once for all I am

not going, so you may talk yourself hoarse, Miss Celia. I want to hear all about the new governess. I heard you jabber-jabbering her name as I came in. Now you shall tell me all there is to know. Boo! Kenneth; get out of my way and don't make those ugly faces. Now then, what's the fun?"

"Hannah, you're worse than ever," said Olivia, "you are the most disagreeable child in the world."

"I'm quite accustomed to hearing that; can't you tell me something fresh?" said Hannah.

"Well, then, you're the plague of all our lives."

"Heard it before, thanks. Think of something original," said the small, red-faced person, leaning back as she spoke comfortably against a low armchair which happened to be within reach. "I have come to listen to your secrets, and you can't get away from me. I have come to stay, and I mean to stay."

"I wish you would turn good," said Celia.

"Likely—I good?" said Hannah.

"If you only would be good even for a little time, I have got a secret which I might tell you."

"A secret?"

Hannah was intensely curious. Her childish lips quivered, and there came a softened half-longing expression into her big blue eyes. If she had a weak point it was a longing to know a real veritable secret.

"I can be good for five minutes," she said, looking at the clock, "will that do, Olivia? I don't think I could be good for seven; but I might manage for five. Will you tell me your secret if I am good for five minutes, *dear* Olive? Here, shall I nestle up close to you?"

"No, don't; you're miles too hot. I have just put on my clean frock, can't you see? Oh, how awfully sticky your hands are!"

"Of course they are; I have been taking the insides out of some fish for cook."

"Hannah, you awful girl; you know mother forbids your going into the kitchen."

"But mother's away."

"Hannah, have you no moral sense?" exclaimed Kenneth.

"I don't know what moral sense is," said Hannah, "but I know one thing, and that is that the five minutes will soon be up, and then I'll be fiercer than ever. I'm bottling up all my badness now, so I'll have a lot to let out at the end of five minutes. Olive, what is your secret? Do tell me, I won't touch you; do, *do* tell me."

"Don't come so close, then; keep your distance."

"You're a crosspatch and I hate you," said Hannah, her small amount of virtue evaporating on the spot. "I won't listen to your secret, I don't want to hear it."

She stuffed both her fingers into her ears, scrambled to her feet, and rushed out of the room, banging the door wildly after her.

"What a truly awful child she is," said Kenneth. "She is a terrible affliction in any household; what are we to do with her?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Celia; "she seems to get worse every day."

"No one can manage her except old Sugar-plum," said Olivia.

"I believe Sugar-plum spoils her," cried Celia. "Sugar-plum ought to go away, and then there might be a chance for Hannah. She pets her and makes much of her, and Hannah can always fly to her when she becomes past bearing to the rest of the house."

Olivia uttered a deep sigh.

"What secret was it that you meant to tell her?" she asked, turning to her sister.

"Why, don't you know, Olive? Mother says Hannah is to be a schoolroom child from ten to one every day."

"Goodness gracious me!" cried Olivia. "What nuts for Margaret North; won't she have a time of it! I do declare it will be a sort of diversion seeing poor Margaret trying to break in the little wild colt. The fact is, Hannah must have been born with a queer twist in her. She is different from all other children. I pity Margaret North; it will be fun, but all the same I pity her."

"And yet in her hearts of hearts I believe Hannah is affectionate," said Celia. "Do you remember, Olive, when her canary died how she sobbed and sobbed, and cried and screamed?"

"Oh, that was passion!" said Olivia.

"Well, I don't think it was quite all passion, for nurse said she refused to eat for nearly a week, and she kept the dead bird in bed with her until it began to turn smelly and they had to take it away, and then she almost went into a fit. Oh, she is affectionate, I am certain. I think she has very strong feelings."

"She's the greatest nuisance a fellow was ever plagued with," said Kenneth; "but there, girls, don't let us talk

about her any more. She's out of the way now, thank goodness! If you are going to meet that new governess I don't mind walking with you, but if so, we ought to start immediately."

"Well, come along," said Celia. "I am all ready."

The girls left the comfortable chairs in which they had been reclining, shook out their neat frocks, and started on their walk, going soberly down the avenue, Kenneth accompanying them. The three chatted as they walked—sometimes they laughed; their gay laughter was borne back upon the breeze. In the shrubbery near by, lying crouched under a big laurel tree, a squat little figure watched them—a pair of bright blue eyes gazed after them with a queer longing in their depths. When the three had turned the corner the owner of the eyes and the squat figure sprang to her feet, uttered a shout, and ran back into the house as fast as ever she could. The little disheveled figure soon reached an old-fashioned nursery in a wing at the extreme end of a rambling old pile.

Seated by the window was an elderly woman, busily engaged darning stockings, a pile of which lay in a large basket by her side.

"Now, Miss Hannah, is that you?" she cried. "Oh, my dear love, what an awful heat you're in. Why, your face is as red as a beetroot; you'll catch cold, Miss Hannah, for sure and certain!"

"I like catching cold," said Hannah. "I like sneezing and blowing my nose; then there's a fuss made about me, and I am put into a corner and cuddled up, or I get into bed and have nice things to drink, and you pet me—dear

old Sugar-plum. Yes, I like being ill. I liked awfully that time when the doctor came three times a day and mother whimpered. I felt important—I felt good. When I am up I am bad, and everyone hates me. Well, all right, I hate everybody back again. I hate them vicious bad.”

“But you don’t hate me now, dearie, do you?”

Hannah had come close up to old Sugar-plum. She began to stroke her wrinkled cheek with her soft, but decidedly sticky hand.

“I hate everybody else,” she said, after a pause.

“Not your father and mother?”

“Oh, don’t I! I hate them worst of all. Next to father and mother I hate Celia and Olivia, and next to them I hate Kenneth. I hate all the servants, and the cats, and the birds, and the rabbits, and the horses, and cows, and——”

“Come, come, shut up, Miss Hannah.”

“I won’t shut up—I hate them all, every one; but I don’t hate my darlin’ dead canary, nor Pip, nor you, Sugar-plum. Where is Pip? Why isn’t he in the nursery?”

“Well, to tell the truth, Miss Hannah, the dog is ill, and you are ordered not to touch him. His nose is hot, and so are his ears, and he won’t touch his food. The mistress gave her orders before she went out today that you were not to touch him.”

“Gave orders, indeed!” said Hannah; “he’s not her dog, he’s mine, and I shall touch him. Poor darlin’, if he is

ill surely he has to be nursed? You can't prevent me, even if you try."

"Miss Hannah, you're a bad, bad girl."

"I know I am," said Hannah, "but I like being bad. I wouldn't be like Celia and Olivia for all you could give me; they are prim, stiff, silly, and *good*—ugh! Nurse, do you know what kind of a body this Margaret North is going to turn out?"

"My dear love, how can I tell you? But you'll soon know for yourself, for your mother said this morning that you are to be in the schoolroom from ten to one every day; but you are to be my child, pet, for the rest of the time."

Hannah stood very still in order to digest this rather startling piece of intelligence.

"I am to be with Olivia and Celia every day from ten o'clock till one," she said slowly; then her eyes sparkled. "I think I shall like it," she continued; "I shall have a real jolly time, but I'm *rather* sorry for Miss North; aren't you, nurse?"

The old nurse's face was quite wrinkled with anxiety.

"You'll try to be good and learn your lessons?" she said.

Hannah did not make the smallest response.

"I am glad I am bad," she said, after a pause; "it is awfully exciting. I can't stay any longer now, Sugarplum; I'm going to find Pip. Good-by."

"Miss Hannah, if you dare to touch that dog!"

But Hannah was out of sight. She ran as fast as her feet could carry her until she found herself in what she

termed the company part of the house. To reach it she had to open some red-baize doors, to run down a long corridor, until at last she stood in a wide lobby, out of which bedrooms opened in all directions. These bedrooms were choicely furnished with bright and luxurious curtains, carpets, and drapery. There were pictures on the walls, there were cozy beds with rich silk coverings. There was everything in these pretty rooms which betokened luxury and wealth. Hannah stood, in spite of her bravery, somewhat in awe of the company part of the house. At one side of the baize doors were luxurious living, and pretty sights, and the sort of things that grown-ups love; at the other side were the children's quarters. Here was the reverse of luxury; the furniture was plain, not to say ugly; the floors were covered with kamptulicon, and there was only a mat at each side of the narrow beds; the windows were without curtains, the corridors were covered with the simplest of matting. All was neat, serviceable, and clean, it is true, but there was no attempt at grandeur.

In Hannah's opinion this was decidedly unfair. With her curious complex nature she had an intense love for beauty, real beauty, and she considered it decidedly wrong to give it all to the grown-ups. It was nothing very terrible to deprive Celia and Olivia of it, but Hannah herself, who worshiped it, might have had a little; even one lovely picture to worship in private would have consoled her, but she had nothing. There was not a plainer room in the house than the old, almost discarded nursery. Hannah's little bed stood in one corner, nurse's big, old-fashioned,

wooden bedstead in another. There was not even a mat in front of Hannah's bed, and the one little window with its lattice panes was small and did not admit much light.

"I am the bad one," thought the little girl to herself, "so, of course, they give me the very ugliest things; but I did not mind as long as I had my canary and Pip." The thought of these pleasant possessions had kept her in a fairly good humor, and comforted her not a little for many long months; but at last there came a terrible morning when the canary lay dead, frightened into giving up its tiny life by a furious assault on the part of the cat. Hannah was nearly mad with fury, but no amount of rage would give the bird back its life; and, as the little girl expressed it, there was a big hole in her heart which would not close forever. Even now the thought of the dead bird was capable of bringing tears to her eyes. She shivered as she stood in the middle of the wide lobby and remembered that it was quite possible that Pip also might die. Oh, Pip was a darling, a darling of all darlings, and he was hers, absolutely and entirely. How much, how very much she loved him! The more ill he was, the more he suffered, the more deep was her affection.

There were all kinds of well-bred dogs in that house, for Mrs. Cardigan was a dog-fancier. There was an immaculate poodle which could do all kinds of tricks; there was also a thoroughbred pug. There were two bulldogs which had won prizes at the Crystal Palace Dog Show; and lately a collie, with sympathetic face and melting eyes, had been added to the dog part of the establishment. But Pip, like his little mistress, had no

beauties to recommend him; he was a mongrel of the mongrels. Hannah had saved him from being drowned when he was a pup, had coaxed nurse to let her bring him up, and was devoted to him. She loved him even better than she had loved the canary. The thought that she was not to see him just because he was ill, and needed her care all the more, made her so fierce that she was almost dangerous.

She stood with her hands clasped before her, thinking hard. A soft and seductive summer breeze came to her from the open bedroom windows; it fanned her hot cheeks and dried the damp rings of her fair hair.

"If only I could do it," she said to herself, "it would punish her, and it would be real fun."

From the longing to do it came the daring determination that it should be done. With a glad, wild whoop, which no one in the house but Hannah could give, she rushed back through the corridor, slammed the red-baize doors behind her, and clattered down the kitchen stairs, and so out into the farmyard.

Nurse had told her she was not to touch Pip. Pip was ill. Hannah was determined to be his nurse upon the spot, and to nurse him in a way which would electrify every person in the house.

From time to time in her short life she had heard a good deal on the subject of sick dogs. The muzzle had been discussed in her presence, and the chances of stamping out hydrophobia had formed a subject of more than one truly horrible discussion in the servants' hall. Hannah often visited the servants' hall—she was rather a

favorite there than otherwise—and had listened to this absorbing topic with wide-open eyes and ears all agog with attention. She loved horrors; they fascinated without frightening her. It now occurred to her that if Pip were ill he might be sickening for hydrophobia. She did not wish him to have it, but at the same time the thought of it excited her almost past bearing. She thought that, if Pip were really sickening for this dreadful disease, she could punish the person she most hated in the world. This person, dreadful as it is to relate, was the child's mother. Mrs. Cardigan had never understood Hannah. She was a very gay woman; she spent the greater part of her time in society, and left her children, Celia, Olivia, and Kenneth, to the charge of their governesses and masters, and Hannah emphatically to the tender mercies of old Sugar-plum. Mrs. Cardigan was proud of Olivia, who was a very graceful and pretty girl; she was also proud of Celia, who was supposed to be clever. Kenneth she considered rather rough, and did not wish to see too much of him; but as he must inherit the property, she regarded him with a certain mixture of respect and affection, and determined, when he grew older, to give him a good deal of her society. But to Hannah she had never shown any feelings but those of marked dislike. She had not wished for another baby when Hannah arrived. It put her out to have a nursery once more; and when the little girl turned out to be not only very plain, but also rude and naughty, the mother determined to banish her as much as possible from her presence.

“Hannah is a dreadful child; she has no heart what-

ever," Mrs. Cardigan used to say to her friends. "She is a thoroughly bad child; I consider myself much afflicted in having her."

On one occasion these words happened to be said in the little girl's presence. Up to that date Hannah had not thought much about her mother one way or other. She had submitted to be kissed by her on the rare occasions when they met, and with a bad grace had allowed her short hair to be combed up straight and her red face to be washed when she was sent for into Mrs. Cardigan's presence; but from that fatal hour she hated her parent with a goodly hatred. She could not bear that placid, handsome face; those cold, blue eyes, something the color of her own, caused a dreadful lump in her throat; those slim fingers, loaded with rings, were her detestation. She hated the fashionable dress, and the worldly face, and the cold, indifferent manner. She hated her father, too, but she hated her mother worst of all; and now the wicked thought darted through her mind that she would find Pip, take him up to her mother's room, and deposit him in the center of that lady's bed.

"If he really has hydrophobia, he will fly at her when she comes in, and give her a real good fright. I don't want him quite to bite her; but even if he does it doesn't greatly matter," thought wicked Hannah.

She was in an ecstasy, trembling all over with the daring of her scheme. She knew the plan of the stables, and, going systematically to work, at last found Pip, looking very hot and languid, in one of the mangers. He

raised his grizzly head when he heard his little mistress' voice, and tried to wag his stumpy tail.

"Darlin' old Pip, here I am," cried the little girl. "Come, Pip, come into my arms, you dear old sick boy." She lifted up the dog and allowed him to lick her all over her hot face.

"Yes, he's going to be mad," she said to herself, "I see it in his eyes. He won't turn against me, I 'spect, but he's going to be mad all the same. Won't mother have a fright! I must just prove, though, that he is getting that awful thing with the long name. If they're mad they don't drink water. I'll give him some; if he don't drink it, he's certain sure to be going clean, staring, stark mad."

Carrying the dog in her arms Hannah strutted across the yard; she reached the pump, and first of all depositing Pip on the ground, managed to pump a little water into a circular basin which stood beneath. She then pushed the dog's nose under the water. He was not thirsty, and would not drink.

"You must, Pip, you must; I has got to find out whether you are mad or not," cried Hannah. She pushed and pushed, and taking some water in her fat, dirty little hand, held it up to his nose.

Pip turned away, shivering and in disgust.

"Oh, dear! he's as mad as possible," cried Hannah to herself, but then she thought she would give him one more last try. Taking up the dog, she bent over the basin. In doing so she overbalanced herself, and Pip tumbled from her arms splash into the water. Now he

was not only seriously ill, but he was soaking wet. This would bring matters to a still greater crisis. She lifted him out of the basin without attempting to dry him, and, running with all her might, returned to the house. The hour was propitious, for it was just that quiet time between lunch and afternoon tea when no one is about. Mrs. Cardigan was away from home, and her maid had taken refuge in the housekeeper's parlor.

Hannah scampered once more down the nursery corridor—the sick dog groaned; he had wetted Hannah quite through her brown holland overall—she felt sticky, dirty, and messy, but nothing would turn her from her purpose.

At last she reached her mother's room. In the center of the bed, with its rich silk coverlet, she deposited the dog. Pip found his quarters soft and pleasant. He looked gratefully at his little mistress, and when she put her hand near him tried feebly to lick it. Poor dog! he was very ill indeed. He looked with eyes of unutterable love at Hannah, and then, closing them, fell into a heavy sleep.

But the naughty child's scheme had not yet been carried out in its entirety. She searched round the room, and presently seeing a piece of pale gray ribbon sticking out of one of her mother's drawers, pulled it until she got it out of the drawer; then, fastening the ribbon round Pip's collar, she secured the other end to the brass post of the bedstead. But still there was more to be done. Mrs. Cardigan might not clearly know what it meant to have Pip lying in the center of her bed, so Hannah must explain matters fully. She ran back to the nursery, seized

a piece of paper and pencil, and sitting down with her back to Sugar-plum, wrote the following sentence in her very badly formed hand:

“Pip won’t drink water, he is very ill, I think he is going mad. Don’t touch.”

With this paper hidden under her pinafore she returned to her mother’s room, pinned it on the coverlet in such a position that it should meet the lady’s eyes the first thing on her return, and then, shouting in her rapture, Hannah went back to the nursery regions.

She was now in high delight—her one taste of exquisite mischief only gave her appetite for more. She began to consider what she could do next. The glory and rapture of doing wrong were filling her little soul with wicked delight. She knew, of course, that her delight would be all too short-lived; she was absolutely certain to get the most severe punishment she had ever had in her life for the terrible sin she had just committed, and she thought that, “In for a penny, in for a pound.” Yes, she would do something more. Who was coming to-day? Oh, of course, now she remembered. Miss North—Margaret North, as the girls called her. Hannah thought it a very ugly name.

“She is the new governess, and she has got to teach me, and she is certain sure to hate me,” thought the child, “so I may just as well give her cause while I am about it. I’ll go into her room, and see what I can do to make things unpleasant for her.”

Miss North’s room was, of course, situated in the schoolroom quarters. It was a very pretty room, with a

lively view from the windows. It was nicely furnished in blue and white. In the center of the dressing-table stood a gay little bouquet of flowers. Hannah looked wildly round her. She thought of all sorts of schemes for making the room uninhabitable; the first thing she did was to take the flowers and fling them away. She then rushed into the garden and picked a quantity of bindweed, which she stuck into the little glass, twined round the pincushion and round the curtains as far as she could reach, and so on to the looking-glass. She also put burrs of a highly sticky order here and there, and finally she secured a very large outdoor spider and put it under Miss North's tooth-glass. She felt wild with glee when she thought of the terror the new governess would experience when she saw the spider. She was about to proceed to still further mischief when the sound of wheels on the gravel outside was distinctly heard. Flinging off her hat, which fell plump in the middle of the floor, she rushed downstairs to catch the first view of the new governess. Her adventure with the dog, her further adventure in Miss North's room were alike forgotten, for if Hannah had one characteristic more marked than another, it was the power of forgetting her wrong-doing the moment it was committed. She ran now to the side entrance, shouting in her usual noisy fashion.

CHAPTER II.

MARGARET.

When Hannah reached the side entrance she suddenly found herself face to face with a tall girl, neatly dressed in a tailor-made gown of dark-blue serge, and with a white sailor hat on her head. The girl had a nice brown-tinted face, a somewhat large, but pleasant mouth, and the frankest, sweetest brown eyes in the world—they looked straight into Hannah's face with a broad and sympathetic interest in their gaze.

"I am Margaret North; are you one of my little pupils?" said the girl. She held out a slim white hand.

Hannah drew back a step. In the whole course of her utterly wild little life this small child had never seen anyone in the least like Margaret North. After a time, during which she found herself choking and quite unable to get out a word, Hannah said almost shyly:

"Are you Miss North?"

"Yes, that is my name."

"Then where are Celia and Olivia?"

"They stopped in the avenue to speak to someone, and I came on alone. Isn't it fun, that you should be the very first person to meet me. Suppose—suppose we have a game at hide-and-seek?"

"Oh, jolly, let's!" cried Hannah. She stuck out her very dirty hand, grasped Miss North's, and tugged and pulled her right into the house.

"You know the ways of the place and I don't," said Margaret. "I hear them coming; they are sure to call out in a moment. They told me to wait on the doorstep for them, but when you came it did seem to be such a chance. Let us hide; where shall we go?"

"I know," said Hannah, "let's go down to the kitchen, and hide in the scullery."

"Oh, I don't think that would be at all the best place! Don't you know some other corner where we can efface ourselves?"

"I have not an idea what you mean by 'efface'," said Hannah, "but I know another place. There's a dark cupboard at the foot of the stairs; let's go in there."

She scampered on in front, wagging her fat legs as she ran. She was all quivering with the newest, queerest feeling.

Miss North followed her as fast as she could go. The two reached the dark cupboard, and vanished into its recess just as Celia and Olivia entered the house.

"Miss North, where are you?" called out Celia's nice ladylike voice.

"Oh, isn't this golloptious!" whispered Hannah; she quivered with ecstasy. "Are you sure you are there?" she continued, clutching hold of Margaret North's hand.

"Yes, of course I am." The new governess was silently laughing.

"It is great fun," she said, "only I wonder why I was so

daring. The fact is I always have such a dreadful spirit of mischief in me, and you did look so comical. What is your name?"

"You had better speak low or they may hear. My name is Hannah—I'm generally called 'Bad little Hannah.'"

"Are you? What an awfully funny idea! Do you know I like the name of Hannah very much; it is so quaint."

"I don't know what quaint is," said Hannah, "but most people hate my name as much as they hate me."

"Hate you!" cried the new governess. "I think you are a perfect darling."

"Oh, do you?"

There came a queer noise in Hannah's throat; it was not exactly a sob nor was it exactly a laugh, but a mixture of both.

The next moment two fat, very fat, and by no means over-clean arms were flung round the governess' neck, and Hannah gave her several great, big, dauby kisses on her cheek. The kisses were wet, the tears had splashed from the blue eyes and had reached the soft, cool cheek of the new governess.

"I meant to hate you, but I don't; I feel quite queer about it," said Hannah. "Why did you do it? It would have been much nicer to hate you. I wish you weren't what you are; it would have been much, much nicer to hate you."

"Oh, you little comicality, I shall scream if you say anything more! What a rage my eldest pupil is in!"

"That's Celia's voice; she's the primmest old thing in the world."

"She is a very nice girl, Hannah, and you must not abuse your sister. Now, I really think we must come out. Fancy my beginning my career as governess by hiding in a dark closet with you. What did you say your name was?—'Bad little Hannah'—well, I shall call you darling little Hannah."

"And I shall call you loving Margaret North. But oh, I wish you had let me hate you; it would have been much nicer, and do you know I must 'fess something."

"What is it?"

"I put an awful big spider under your tooth-glass, an outdoor spider, you know, the kind that comes into your bed at night and bites you—and I put bindweed round your glass and stuck burrs in your drawers. I did it because I hated you, but I don't now. What is the matter; are you laughing or crying?"

"Oh, laughing, child, laughing; and do you know that I adore spiders! I wonder if this is a very large one, and if it belongs to the species—oh, I forgot the name. I have studied spiders, Hannah, scientifically."

"What's that?"

"I will explain it to you presently—but don't you hear the voices? they're getting nearer. Hannah, my child, we must come out and present ourselves. We have both got into an awful scrape, there is no doubt of it; we are both in hot water. You must cling to me now, Hannah, through thick and thin; you musn't let the others scold me too much."

"If they dare to, I'll bite 'em," said Hannah.

"Oh, pray don't go to such extremes; gently, Hannah, as you love me. You do love me, don't you?"

"Course I do; they shan't say a word against you. Come along, this is a lark!"

"Oh, yes, it is a great, enormous lark! Now then!"

As Celia and Olivia and Kenneth were walking disconsolately through the passage in much bewilderment as to the extraordinary vanishing of quiet Margaret North, the door of the end of the stairs was opened, and a very dusty, rough, dirty, and smeary-teary Hannah, accompanied by a cobwebby and somewhat draggled-looking Margaret North appeared on the scene.

"I hope you'll forgive me, girls," said Margaret's hearty voice, "but I met this dear little mite, and we could not resist having a bit of fun. We just hid here in order that you should look for us, but now I am going to be good again. Sometimes, you know, I have such an irresistible desire for a lark, and this child set it all going. Now kiss me, Hannah, and run off to the nursery."

"I'm going to your room first," said Hannah. "I has got to do something there."

"Hannah, do you hear?" called out Olivia. "You are not to go to Miss North's room. Do you hear, you naughty child?"

"Oh, don't scold her!" said Miss North. "She is heartily welcome to go to my room as often as she likes. Listen, Hannah; you might find another glass, and another—you know what. I don't mind if I have two or three. I am deeply interested, don't you know?"

"What are you talking about?" asked Celia.

"Oh, nothing, my dear! Only a secret which I share with darling little Hannah. Run, Hannah, now, and do what you are bid."

Hannah rushed upstairs, her eyes sparkling.

"Well, this is a queer go!" she said to herself when she reached the nursery landing. "I meant to hate her, and I am beginning to love her better than I love Pip, or even my darling dead canary."

She rushed into the governess' room, tore the bindweed from its place round the glass, pulled all the burrs off the dressing-table and the curtains, and then rushed frantically to the window in order to deposit them on the grass beneath. A group of people were standing there. Hannah gave one wild look. Miss North was talking to Celia—she was making Celia laugh. Olivia was listening with her mouth open.

"How very silly she looks when her mouth is open," thought Hannah to herself. "What fun, what fun!—it will punish her. Yes, if I aim straight, I may do it."

She flung the burrs and bindweed with all her might and main; the next instant Olivia found herself encircled by them. She gave an angry cry, looked up, and saw the red face of her sister disappearing from view at the governess' window.

"Miss North," she said, "you will let me say something, won't you?"

"Certainly, my dear; what is it?"

"You don't understand Hannah."

"Well, scarcely yet, I suppose, seeing I have only just

come; but I think her a dear little girl—so original.”

“Original!” cried Kenneth, who was standing near. “Why, she certainly is that; but I’ll tell you what it is, Miss North, she is about the most tiresome, disagreeable child in the world.”

Margaret North’s eyes gave an angry flash; then she looked straight at Kenneth.

“You talk like that of your own sister?” she said. “I am surprised!”

He colored under her direct gaze, and shuffled with his feet.

“It is true,” said Celia eagerly, “no one exaggerates about Hannah; it would be impossible. Now, just look at poor Olive. Hannah has thrown a lot of those odious burrs all over her. Olivia, do stand still, you’ll tear that fine lace; let me get them away. There, there! what a terrible child she is! It is only fair, Miss North, that you should be warned. I see you are quite taken by her; but please don’t encourage her in any of her mischievous ways.”

“Well, I like her very much,” said Miss North. “Of course, I can see that she has lots of spirit, and perhaps she is troublesome at times; but the fact is that sort of child cannot be driven, she must be led, and gently. I trust your mother will give her into my care, for I am firmly convinced that I can make a very fine character out of her.”

Celia put on a disdainful look; Olivia did not take the trouble to reply. Kenneth, after a pause, said quietly:

“I believe you are to teach her, but I bet you a pair of

gloves that, by the end of the week, you'll be crying out because you have too much of Hannah. As a rule, our governesses leave us in from three to four months, and all on account of Hannah. She is the nuisance of the house; but, there! you hate me for speaking against my sister, and, of course, I love Celia and Olivia, but Hannah, I draw the line at Hannah."

"Won't you come into the house now, Miss North? You must be tired, and I am sure tea is ready," said Olivia, in her most grown-up tone. Celia had torn her lace in extricating the burrs; she felt decidedly cross, and did not want to have any more conversation with Hannah for its subject.

CHAPTER III.

PIP.

Mrs. Cardigan came home late. She had spent the afternoon at a tennis party, but as the people she expected to meet did not happen to be present, and as her side lost the game, she returned to the Meadows in anything but the sweetest humor. Celia and Olivia, who were standing at the lodge, saw the pony-carriage as it flew down the avenue. They ran to meet their mother; she was driving herself, and pulled up when she saw them.

"Well, my dears, well! What is it, Olivia? How dreadfully hot you look. You have been rushing about in the sun; just the way to spoil your complexion. You really ought to be more careful; I am always complaining to you about it."

"But, mother, in the present day girls do not think so much about their complexions—what with cycling, and rowing, and playing cricket, as well as tennis, there is no time for that sort of thing."

"My dear, I beg of you not to argue with me. Oh, how dreadfully you have torn your dress! Do you know that the lace on that dress cost three and six-pence a yard? We have not money to throw away in that reckless fashion. Why did you wear that special white muslin to-day,

Olivia? I meant you to put it on for Lady Fenchurch's party next week."

"Oh, I am wearing it because Clements said it was the only clean dress in my wardrobe," replied the girl, pouting as she spoke.

"How terribly careless of Clements! Dear, dear, what servants are coming to in these days! Well, but that does not answer my question; why did you tear the lace?"

"I did not tear it. It was Hannah."

"I might have guessed as much," said Mrs. Cardigan. "Whenever that child's name is mentioned, it is to tell me of one of her mad doings. We must send her to school, there is no doubt whatever on the subject."

"I wish you would, mother," said Celia, speaking for the first time. "I don't know what is to become of us if Hannah is in the schoolroom all day. Oh, by the way, the new governess has come."

"Well, my dear, we were expecting her; it would be very strange if she had not come. I cannot see her to-night, Celia, I really cannot; but I will to-morrow. Give her a kind message from me; say that I am tired, and we are having people to dinner. Now, my dears, I cannot stay any longer chatting to you."

Mrs. Cardigan prepared to whip up the ponies, but Celia came a step forward.

"Please, mother, one moment first. Hannah grows worse and worse, and I thought you ought to know. I am afraid Miss North is not——"

"Is not what, Celia? Oh, my dear, you cannot talk before——" She glanced back at the smartly dressed

tiger who was seated at the back. "Philip," she said, "go on to the house and say that I shall be home in a moment, and then wait on the steps to take the ponies to the stables. Now then, girls, if you have anything special to tell me you had better step into the carriage."

The young groom, who knew perfectly well why he was dismissed, disappeared as he was desired, and the girls were able to pour out their tale of woe to their mother. Celia was the spokeswoman.

"Mother, Miss North seems a most extraordinary girl—oh, she is nice-looking, only awfully sunburnt, by the way, but still quite a jolly, modern sort of girl; she has been to Newnham, and is up to date. She talks nicely, too; but, mother, I assure you she is a perfect romp."

"A perfect what, my dear?"

"A romp, mother. The very first thing she did when she came into the house was to hide in the lumber cupboard with Hannah."

"To hide with Hannah?"

"She did, mother, I assure you, and she and Hannah came out all over cobwebs, and laughing and joking, and the best of friends, and then Hannah ran up to Miss North's bedroom, of all places. The naughty child had been concocting mischief as usual, but Miss North seems to have won her heart, and the next thing we saw was a lot of burrs and bindweed being thrown out of the window, and they tumbled all over Olivia, and that's how the lace got torn."

"Oh, she is a naughty girl!" said Mrs. Cardigan. "Hannah must go to school; I shall get particulars from

Lady Fenchurch of the very strictest school she happens to know. We cannot have the whole house upset because of one very naughty little girl. Now, my dears, we have arrived at the house. If Miss North is really a romp she certainly——”

“Oh, she is awfully nice, mother; we did not mean to complain of her. It is only Hannah; she ought to know at once that Hannah must not take up all her time.”

“Certainly she must not,” cried Mrs. Cardigan; “everything would be all right if Hannah were not there. What a terrible affliction it is to have such a child?”

When Mrs. Cardigan reached the house she gave the ponies over to the care of the groom, and went up to her bedroom. She was tired, and did not at the first moment see Pip, who was now fast asleep, and rather enjoying himself than otherwise in the center of the bed.

Mrs. Cardigan walked across the room and rang the bell. She wanted Clements to come to her. Several people were coming to dine at the Meadows, and she noticed with a frown between her brows that her evening dress had not yet been put out. The next moment her eyes lighted on Pip in the middle of the bed. She was fond of dogs, and at the first moment thought it might be Fido or Ladas, or another of her pets, but a second glance showed her that it was the much-disliked mongrel, the dog which belonged to the equally disliked child of the house.

“Pip,” she cried, “how dare you, you bad, wicked little wretch!”

Pip whimpered, raised an imploring eye, and turned

softly round on his back. If it had been Ladas or Fido this action would have completely mollified Mrs. Cardigan, but in the case of Pip she saw no beauty in it. The gravest sinner of all, Hannah, as the cause of this unseemly appearance, she had not yet found out. She turned away, her eyes glistening with anger, and prepared to administer severe chastisement upon Pip with one of the bedroom towels. The next instant, however, her eyes were attracted to the much-blotted and extraordinary label which was fastened to the bed-post.

"Pip won't drink water—he is very ill. I think he is going mad. Don't touch."

Hannah's writing was too remarkable not to be instantly recognized, and Mrs. Cardigan, with a look of ungovernable anger in her eyes, sat down on the nearest chair. What was to be done? The insufferable insolence of the child was past bearing. How dare she bring a dirty sick dog and put it on her mother's bed! How dare she write that label!

Mrs. Cardigan forgot that she was tired, that the time for dinner was rapidly approaching; she forgot all else but the ungovernable anger which filled her breast against Hannah.

"Clements," she cried, the instant the maid appeared, "go to the nursery and bring Miss Hannah back with you."

"Oh, lor', ma'am!" said Clements, "how in the world did Pip get here?" She approached the bed as she spoke, and prepared to take the dog away.

"Leave him, Clements, and bring Miss Hannah to me directly."

Clements departed in some astonishment. A moment later fleet little steps were heard flying down the passage, the door of the bedroom was opened, and Hannah entered with a bound, looking redder than ever, and more untidy.

"Oh, Pip, you darling," she cried, "are you going madder and madder?" She did not take the least notice of her mother, but, rushing to the bed, flung her arms round the dog.

"Hannah, come here this moment."

"Yes, mother, I am here."

"Stand up, get off the bed, come here, look me in the face."

"Yes, mother, yes."

"Why did you bring Pip into my room?"

Hannah did not speak. She could be desperately naughty, but she could not always give a reason for what she did; she could not give any adequate reason now, and thought it best to remain silent. Accordingly she hung her head, and a look of extreme obstinacy visited her little mouth.

"Hannah, I am waiting for you to speak. Why did you put Pip upon my bed?"

Then Hannah looked up in desperation. There was a vindictive look in the eyes of the child's mother; that vindictive look fired Hannah's soul; she lost her stubborn attitude, and replied with slow, vehement determination:

"Because I thought he would go mad."

"And if so, why did you bring a mad dog to lie down upon my bed?"

Again Hannah was silent. She would not tell a lie; she had never told a lie in her life, being, as a rule, destitute of fear.

"Why did you do it, Hannah?" repeated her mother.

Again Hannah was silent.

"Will you speak?"

"Yes, mother."

"Well, why did you do it?"

"Because I hoped"—there came a sort of sob, a sob of absolute despair, then the wild blue eyes looked up into the face of the woman, and the child replied with a queer, unchildlike distinctness, "Because I hoped he would bite you."

"You hoped this mad dog would bite your mother, Hannah?"

"Yes!"

Mrs. Cardigan was quite silent for a moment; she was not a particularly affectionate mother—she had never done a kind thing for Hannah since Hannah had arrived on the scene. Nevertheless, something smote at her now; an impulse came over her, a queer, queer impulse; if only she had yielded to it! This was the impulse—to go up to the extraordinary child, put her arms round her, fall on her knees by her, and say:

"Hannah, you cut me to the heart; it cannot be true, it cannot be true."

Had she done so all that followed might never have taken place; but, alas! with natures like Mrs. Cardigan's

such impulses seldom last for long. The next moment the merciful desire had passed away, and wild, ungovernable anger filled the woman's heart.

"Hannah," she said, "do you hate me?"

"Yes," answered Hannah.

"And you really wished this dog to bite me?"

"I did."

"Then you are a wicked little girl; you are quite one of the most wicked little girls I ever heard of. God does not love you. God is very angry with you."

Hannah cast a shuddering glance up at the ceiling.

"He is looking at you now, and He is very angry. He is saying that He never heard of quite such a wicked little girl as you. Sometimes people who are so bad are struck dead by God. There is an account of two people in the Bible who were struck dead."

"I know about that," said Hannah. "They told lies, but God won't strike me, 'cos I never tell lies."

"God punishes people whether they tell lies or not, if they are bad and wicked like you, Hannah."

Hannah felt herself trembling, and some of the redness of her face paled; she was really very uncomfortable; her revenge was not turning out nearly as pleasant as she had anticipated. She glanced desparingly at Pip, who looked at her out of two pathetic eyes.

"Hannah," said Mrs. Cardigan, "whether you hate me or not, I stand in the place of God to you. God wishes me to punish you, and I am going to do it. Pip is to be shot to-night."

"Mother, you cannot; mother, you don't mean it."

“Pip is to be shot to-night; you will never see him again. Now go to your room; you are to stay there until I give you leave to come out—no one is to speak to you. I shall see nurse and give her orders. You are to stay in your room—go. I am punishing you because God wishes it. Now go!”

CHAPTER IV.

THE PUNISHMENT.

Hannah stood with her face growing whiter and whiter every moment. She was past speech, but she was not quite past action. She did not mind a bit what her mother said, at least not now; all the terror and anguish of such words were to visit her poor little soul later on, but now her one agony lay in the knowledge that Pip was to be shot; she was never, never, never to see Pip again. Her darling, the dog she had rescued as a puppy, the creature who belonged to her and her alone. Pip was to be shot.

"Mother, you cannot mean it," she longed to say, but she found that the words would not pass her lips.

"Go, Hannah," said Mrs. Cardigan, "go, you wicked, wicked child; send your nurse to me; I'll give her full directions. No, after all, I will not have her; she shall not have anything to do with this punishment, she pets you; Sugar-plum must go; you must be put under quite a different *regime*. Hannah, what are you staring at me for? Go and wait in the passage until I send someone who will punish you properly."

"I won't go," said Hannah; at least she could say these words. "If Pip is to be shot I'll stay with Pip. You can

shoot me too; yes, I don't mind, I'd be gladder than anything if you would shoot me too. Oh, you hateful, hateful, hateful mother!"

She rushed to the bed, scrambled up on it, and took the sick dog in her arms. With the feel of the little rough head against her cheek, her sorest feelings gave way.

"Oh, Pip, Pip!" she sobbed; "oh, Pip; oh, Pip!"

Pip began to lick her cheek, his tongue was hot, he was really ill, he licked her little red face all over. Her tears dropped on him as he did so. Hannah was a very dirty little figure, and Pip was also messy and dirty, and the beautiful silk coverlet received ugly marks, and Mrs. Cardigan's anger rose to a white heat. She went up to the child and took her hand.

"You wicked little girl," she said; "come with me this moment—Hannah, I wonder you are not afraid."

Hannah struggled and screamed and roared, and tried to bite her mother, but Mrs. Cardigan was the stronger of the two; she soon bore the sobbing, frantic child from the room, and stood for a moment in the passage to consider; then, with a grim smile on her face, she made up her mind. She walked with Hannah down the corridor. Hannah was too wild with rage to know where she was being taken. After all it did not matter—if Pip was going to die nothing else in all the world mattered. But when Mrs. Cardigan turned to her left, instead of going through the familiar red-biaze doors, and when she began to mount some rickety stairs, and then to go down another corridor, and then to mount other stairs, Hannah suddenly perceived what her mother's intention was.

On one side of the house was an old tower—a disused tower—about which ugly, ugly, queer, queer stories were told; the tower was at least two hundred years older than the rest of the house. Mrs. Cardigan was taking Hannah now to the disused tower. Soon they reached the turret stairs and began to mount up and up and up. These stairs were made of stone, and were much worn by the trampling of feet long dead. At last they reached a small room at the top. Mrs. Cardigan flung open the door. The room was destitute of furniture, it had a tiny slit of a window, but no fireplace. The window was shut, but Mrs. Cardigan, walking across the room, flung it open. She had to exercise some strength to do so. A cool breath of air came into the room; she waited, still holding Hannah's hot little hands in one of hers, until a draught of air refreshed the chamber. She then shut the window again, and turned to the sobbing child.

"You shall stay here," she said. "There have been wicked people before in this room, but none more wicked than you. You shall spend the night here. If you have had supper you will not want anything to eat until the morning. No one will know you are here except God; He will know. If you listen at the window you will probably hear the men shooting Pip. Now, good-by; I shall come to see you again in the morning."

"Oh, mother, mother, you cannot, you don't mean it. Oh, don't leave me in this room! oh, mother! mother!"

"Let go, Hannah; let go."

Mrs. Cardigan pushed the child from her. She then

locked and barred the door outside, and her retreating footsteps were heard going away.

She reached her own room in time to dress for dinner. Clements was waiting for her.

"Clements," she said, "I have been obliged to punish Miss Hannah very severely. Please tell Sugar-plum that I shall speak to her in the morning about Miss Hannah, but that she is not to see her to-night; no one is to see her nor to speak to her."

"Oh, ma'am, the poor child!"

"I beg of you, Clements, not to plead for her; if you do I shall be obliged to give you a month's notice. Hannah is a very wicked little girl; she has cut me to the heart; I cannot tell you what she has said and what she has done. Now have the goodness to remove that dog. But just wait one moment."

Mrs. Cardigan took her note-book out of her pocket; she scribbled something on a page of it, and then tore it out.

"Take that to the stables and give it to Jim," she said; "see that he does what I have desired."

On the note were written the words:

"Shoot this dog before you go home to-night. Take away his body afterwards and bury it. Miss Hannah is not to see the animal again."

The note and the sick dog were conveyed from the room, the dirty silk coverlet was desired to be sent to the cleaner's, and a fresh one laid upon Mrs. Cardigan's luxurious bed. Half an hour later she was arrayed in a dazzling dress of cream-colored silk; diamonds flashed round

her queenly throat, diamonds flashed in her raven hair. She drew her long gloves up her shapely arms, and, taking up her fan, went slowly downstairs. Her guests all remarked on her beauty; her husband looked proudly at her; she enjoyed herself immensely at dinner, and forgot all about bad little Hannah.

There are other mothers like her in the world, but, thank God! not many.

CHAPTER V.

THE OAK DOOR BETWEEN.

Hannah had spent a good deal of her naughty little life with the servants, and, in consequence, she was well up in very undesirable lore. All the stories which such people would gather together and repeat with unction regarding the old tower had been poured into Hannah's willing ears. Something naughty came out at night and walked about the rooms, and crept down the ancient stairs and lost itself in the cellars below. The naughty Thing was of a nature which made people shudder. One of the footmen had once seen it crossing the lawn outside. The moon had been at the full that night, and the Thing had shone out clear, and the footman had come plump up to it and had fainted right away; the kitchen maid had been dismissed from the Meadows because she had told such awful stories about the Thing that came down the turret stairs and disappeared in the cellars below that she had frightened not only herself, but the cook, into hysterics, and there happened to be a dinner party that day and the sweet-breads had been spoiled, and Mrs. Cardigan had been very angry, and when the cook explained the reason, the kitchen maid was dismissed.

Nevertheless, stories were still told about the old tower,

and many of them had come to Hannah's ears. At first, when her mother left her, the passion which filled her little heart kept up her courage. She said to herself that she did not care. She rushed to the door and shook it violently. But the door was partly made of iron and partly of stout oak, and it resisted all Hannah's frantic efforts. The door was cold, and hard, and pitiless, and Hannah's bursting heart felt this hardness and coldness right to its inmost core. Her passion, in spite of herself, although she kept it up on purpose, lashing herself into fresh furies by every means in her power, could not help cooling; the room at the top of the tower with its tiny window was cold; Hannah soon began to shiver. When this shivering took place, fear came in through that narrow window and bore the poor little girl company. She was hungry, too, for she was only just preparing to sit down to her supper when her mother's summons had reached her. Hunger and cold are bad companions for a nervous child, and very soon the courage for which she was famous began to ooze out and out of her poor little body. It seemed to Hannah to creep out of her fingers, out of her toes, out of her mouth; it seemed to vanish from her eyes, to desert her whole miserable little frame. Oh, it was cruel, cruel to lock her up here! What an awful tower this was, and how high up she was, how far away from all the rest of the world! Oh, she wished she was dead! Why did they not shoot her when they shot Pip!

This last thought brought back all her agony about her dog. Was there ever surely in all the wide world such a

dreadful mother as hers?—a mother who could deliberately order the pet she loved so fondly to be shot!

Poor Hannah flung herself face downward on the floor and shook from head to foot with frantic sobs. They were not so much now sobs of anger as sobs of veritable pain; she felt her little heart aching—aching as it had never ached before, for the dog she loved, whose life was to be taken from it.

“I don’t believe he was going mad,” thought the child, “he was better when he licked my face. His tongue was not so hot, and—and—oh, Pip! oh, Pip! Oh, mother, how could you be so cruel! Oh, mother, why was I born, why was I born?”

Poor Hannah went to the little slit of a window and tried to look out. It was a very tiny window indeed. By exercising all her power, which was pretty considerable, she managed to pull back the bolts and to open it. A fresh draught of pure, sweet air rushed into the tiny cell and comforted her for a moment or two—if only the slit was a little wider she might have poked her head out—she might have squeezed out her miserable body and flung herself in despair on the grass beneath; but Mrs. Cardigan was too wise to expose Hannah to peril of this sort, and by no possible means could she escape from her high prison through the narrow window. She could look out, however, and she could also look down. Far below her was the yard where the coach houses and stables were, where the different animals were kept. She could not see very well, because the outlet was so narrow, but she could see something. Occasionally a figure would pass just

within range of her eye; the voices of the people as *they* talked were also borne up to her on the soft summer air. She began to hope, for a child is always hopeful, that her mother would satisfy herself with having punished her, and would let Pip's life be spared. If so, she thought she would not greatly mind even spending a night in this dreadful room. She would try hard not to think of the Thing—it was only seen on moonlight nights—and she did not think there would be a moon to-night. Besides, it might not come to her, it might begin to clatter down the stairs lower down. She thought she could bear the awful, awful punishment if only they would spare Pip's life. If Pip died, nothing really mattered; the Thing might come then and welcome, Hannah would not mind; she would be glad because it might frighten her to death, and she could go and join Pip in some other world—but where? The child sat still, huddled up on the floor. Was her mother right when she said that God was very angry with her—if He was, He might not let her come into the beautiful paradise where He kept the children whom He loved. But was God angry? Hannah shivered and wondered, and began to think that He was, and just as this last agony of all reached her, she heard, sharp and distinct on the night air, the sound of a pistol-shot.

Instantly she guessed what had happened; she gave a short, agonized scream, and fell fainting on the ugly, dirty floor of her little cell.

It was an hour later when she came to herself. All the daylight had faded, and she could not at first remember where she was—then an agony of uncontrollable terror as-

sailed her, and she began to scream at the top of her voice. She screamed until she made herself hoarse; but up in the turret room no voice could possibly reach the other inmates of the house. If the servants did happen to hear a commotion, for the kitchen premises were almost exactly under the tower, they would only suppose that the Thing—the awful, terrible Thing—was having a riot all by itself, and would be more than ever careful not to go near it.

Hannah suddenly seemed to recollect this, and the noises died away in her throat. Yes, it was no use making a noise, no one could hear her. Of course God was angry, terribly angry; He had allowed Pip to be shot, and He had allowed her mother to lock her up here, and most likely by the morning she would be dead; for the Thing—the evil, awful Thing—would visit her, and if she saw it she knew she should die. She would be bad little Hannah no longer, she would be dead little Hannah instead. They would take her up and put her on a bed, and stretch her out very long, and put something they called a shroud on her, and then they would place her in a coffin and screw it down, and she would lie with other children in the family vault. She would be dead little Hannah, and they would all be glad, every one of them. Perhaps Sugar-plum might shed a tear or two, but all the others would be glad. She shuddered and wondered vaguely, with the uncontrollable anguish and puzzled thought of a child, why God had given her life.

“Why did God let me be born?” she said to herself, “and why did God let mother hate me? Oh, I am so mis-

erable! I am so frightened! Oh, God, please kill me now, and don't let the Thing come! Oh, God, I cannot look at the awful, awful Thing!"

Her terrors were reaching a climax, the little room grew darker and darker; she could only just see the tiny window; she was cold, for the night air was blowing in strongly; she was hungry, although her terror was getting the better of her sense of appetite. She was staring straight before her; it seemed to her that her brain was going round and round. She wondered what was happening; she heard confused noises in her ears. Her heart began to beat hard and fast. Oh, hark, hark! what was that noise? What was it, what was it? It was coming up the stairs, it was getting nearer—oh, it was coming to her, it was coming to kill her—the Thing!

"Oh, God, you are cruel!" she cried. "Oh, don't let the Thing come into the room!" She screamed again—a loud, piercing scream.

At that moment a voice answered her:

"Hannah, is that you?"

"Oh, don't, don't, *don't* come in!" shrieked Hannah from within.

"Hannah, it is I, Margaret North. What is the matter, dear? Where are you?"

"Margaret North?" cried the child. She sprang with the quickness of lightning to the other side of the locked oak door. "Are you there, Margaret; are you there?"

"I am outside the door, darling. What is the matter, Hannah?"

"I am so terrified, Margaret. Mother has locked me in

here, and she has had Pip shot, and I am locked in here for the night; and—and—there's a *Thing* that comes—oh, Margaret, Margaret, I am mad with fright!"

"You need not be, Hannah; there is no *Thing*, as you call it; that is all nonsense."

"Oh, Margaret, I cannot help it, I am so frightened; oh, I shall go mad, I shall die!"

"You won't do either, dear, for I am going to stay with you."

"You! But you cannot get in."

"Never mind; I shall stay outside here in the passage, just at the other side of this door, and when you knock to me I'll knock back to you. No *Thing* can get in, for if it tries to, it will have to go through me first, and I'll fight it to the death. I am going to stay here with you."

"Oh, Margaret, you *are* good; but for how long will you stay—for half an hour?"

"No, darling, all night; at any rate, until the daylight comes back. Don't be a bit frightened, Hannah, for I shall stay."

"Oh, you are good, you are good!" sobbed the child. She fell on her knees at the other side of the door; an ecstasy of relief visited her. If Margaret was outside the *Thing* could not come in. Her present terror with regard to the *Thing* was so great that nothing else, even the death of Pip, seemed to matter. She crouched down by the door, and Margaret sat down so close at the other side that the little girl could feel the door shake as Margaret's body plumped against it.

"There's nothing between us but this little bit of oak

and iron," said Margaret. "I shall stay here all night; I am really quite comfortable; I only wish I could take you in my arms, Hannah."

"Oh, Margaret, but it is so nice to have you here."

"And I can love you just the same, although there is a door between us," was the reply.

"I'll sit so close to the door, Margaret, and you'll sit so close the other side that——"

"That our love can go right through," said Margaret.

"Oh, it is lovely, Margaret; I do love you back again. It is good of you."

"I like to do it; you see I love you; now try to go to sleep."

"I think I will. I'll lay my head against the door."

"Just knock with your little knuckles, Hannah, so that I may know the exact spot, and I'll lay my head against the other side."

"Oh, Margaret, Margaret, do you hear my knuckles; now, do you hear them?"

"Yes, darling; now I know the exact spot; my head shall rest there."

"And my head, here," said Hannah. "And where is your hand, Margaret; couldn't your hand rest up against the door, lower down?"

"Yes, it shall—it shall. I'll knock with my knuckles; now, here is my hand."

"And here is mine," said the child. "I can almost feel your hand through the door, Margaret."

"Then that's all right, darling, and you'll go to sleep."

"I think I will. Margaret, you are sure God is not angry."

"He is angry," said the governess, "but not with you. Go to sleep, love. He sent me to you and I have come. Now go to sleep, little Hannah."

CHAPTER VI.

A TERRIBLE THING.

Mrs. Cardigan slept well that night. She had enjoyed a particularly pleasant evening, and if she thought of Hannah at all it was only with a passing comfortable feeling that she was dealing with necessary firmness with the child, and that she would be all the better for her punishment.

"She is becoming past bearing," thought the mother, as she nestled down in her soft and luxurious bed; "but this night's punishment will show her that I mean what I say, and I must look out for a school for her. I cannot be worried with a child of that sort about."

After her excellent night Mrs. Cardigan got up the next morning in admirable spirits. She had tea in her room at seven o'clock, and she went downstairs for the family breakfast at nine. There were several guests in the house, the sort of guests whom Mrs. Cardigan delighted in—they flattered her, if not exactly in so many open words, yet by admiring glances, and by the utterances of those pretty nothings which women of her sort delight in hearing.

She had intended to go up to Hannah before breakfast, in order to send her down to Sugar-plum, but she forgot

all about it until she got downstairs. Then, as she sat down to her own luxurious meal, the remembrance of the little child in her prison did come back, but she reflected that hunger also would be good for Hannah, and that she would see to the child as soon as ever breakfast was over. But after breakfast there came a further delay, for some of the visitors were about to catch the next train for town, and Mrs. Cardigan had to see them off, and then had to go through the gardens with the others, and so it was really between eleven and twelve o'clock before Margaret North could find her. She had not seen Margaret at all yet. Mrs. Cardigan's sister had engaged the young girl, and Mrs. Cardigan, although she was quite willing to give her children up to Miss North's influence and teaching, had not laid eyes on her up to the present moment. She now went to her room, where she was greeted by poor old Sugar-plum.

"If you please, ma'am," said the old nurse, "I can't find Miss Hannah. I thought she was sleeping in your dressing-room, and I told Miss North so; but Clements says that she did not pass the night there, and I cannot find the dear, blessed child anywhere."

"Keys," replied Mrs. Cardigan, "I have a great deal to say to you with regard to Miss Hannah. Her conduct last night was quite past bearing; her rudeness and impertinence to me and the awful things she said made it necessary for me to take extreme steps, and I now intend to arrange to send the child to school."

"Yes, ma'am," replied the old nurse, a dubious, puzzled expression on her face. "You'll excuse me, ma'am, but I

think that child does want different treatment. I don't say as she is a good child; I don't pretend it——”

“You had better not, Keys; and pray now don't be too long-winded. I have ordered the carriage, and am going out in half an hour. Miss Hannah is past bearing, and I shall send her to school, so you had better begin to get her clothes ready. Order what are necessary—things plain, but serviceable. You can go into town yourself this afternoon, and get what is required at Mason's shop.”

“Thank you, ma'am. I was just going to ask you a question, ma'am. Is it true that you ordered the little dog Pip to be shot?”

“It is true, Keys. Don't you think you rather forget yourself?”

“I don't know about that, ma'am. But, if you please, it was not your dog; it was Miss Hannah's; she rescued him when he was a puppy, and she was that fond of him—— Oh, I beg your pardon, I'm sure!”

Keys was interrupted in her narrative, for there had come another knock at the door, and at that moment a tall, girlish figure, with a sunburnt face and honest brown eyes, appeared on the threshold.

“I am Margaret North; I have come to see you, Mrs. Cardigan, about Hannah.”

“Come in, Miss North, please, and shut the door. Nurse, you can go. You understand my directions; go to Mason's and see about Miss Hannah's clothes this afternoon. Walters can drive you in. Now, Miss North, will you take a chair, please? I have not had the pleasure of making your acquaintance hitherto, but I am glad to

see you. I trust you find everything comfortable and quite to your mind. If you do not, please speak to the housekeeper; she has orders to make you thoroughly comfortable. What do you think of the girls? We are all so pleased with Olivia's musical talent, and Celia has quite a taste for languages. I consider her German remarkable for a girl of her age. Have you examined her yet, Miss North? My sister says that you speak German like a native."

"I have not yet had time to attend to the children's studies," replied Miss North. She did not sit, but let her hand just touch the edge of the chair, against which she partly leaned. "I have been very much taken up with Hannah; she is seriously ill."

"Hannah ill! what do you mean, and how do you know anything about her? I locked her up in the turret room for extreme naughtiness and insubordination. What do you mean, Miss North? I don't understand you."

"I am sorry to say that Hannah is ill and ought to be attended to immediately. I spent the night with her; had I not done so she might have been dead or out of her mind this morning." Margaret's eyes were flashing; she was looking full at the fashionably dressed lady, who also now stood up and gazed back at her in some slight alarm.

"But I do not understand," she said, "I locked Hannah in the turret room. How can you possibly tell that she is ill? What nonsense you are talking when you say you spent the night with her."

"I spent the night, Mrs. Cardigan, at the other side of the door. I happened to hear Hannah scream, and ran

upstairs to find out what was the matter. I then discovered that the child was locked into a room which is said to be haunted."

"Oh, what utter folly!" cried Mrs. Cardigan, stamping her foot.

"It was not utter folly to your little girl, I can assure you, last night; she was in a state of terrible agony; but I sat outside the door, and by that means I comforted her, and the poor little thing fell asleep. She is complaining of great cold now, and her voice is hoarse, and I know she is very ill. Will you kindly give me the key of the door, in order that I may liberate her at once?"

Mrs. Cardigan stood perfectly still, without replying; her face went white.

"Do you know that you are an extremely impertinent, interfering girl?" she said. "What right had you to come between me and my own child? A child also who was not even one of your pupils; I meant you to have something to do with her, but not much. What do you mean?"

"I mean that in the interests of humanity I had to look after the child," replied Margaret North. "Mrs. Cardigan, I scarcely know what to say to you. I know quite well what our relative positions are in the eyes of the world; but there is another point of view, and I wish to say most distinctly that I cannot stay in this house if—you intend to go on punishing your little daughter in the way you did last night. I am not afraid of you, not in the least. I can go away to-day, if you wish it, or I can take care of Hannah and try to show her where she

is wrong. I love the child, I loved her the moment I saw her. I believe I can have a happy influence over her. If you will give her up to me, I will do my best for her, but, if not, then I must resign the situation."

"This is indeed unpardonable!" cried Mrs. Cardigan.

At that moment Mr. Cardigan entered the room

"I think you had better leave us now, Miss North," said the lady of the house.

"I will when you give me the key in order that I may let Hannah out."

"How do you do, Miss North?" said Mr. Cardigan. He bowed to the young governess, whom he had happened to meet the night before. "My dear, did you say you were going to drive to Oakley View this morning? I think the Watts' would like to go with you."

"Certainly, Roger, certainly. That will do, Miss North."

"But I have not got the key," insisted the governess.

"What key?" asked Mr. Cardigan.

"Hannah is locked up in the turret room," said Margaret, "and I want to let her out."

"In the turret room; what a naughty little piece of mischief she is! Has she locked herself in?"

"No, no, my dear! I have done it," said his wife. "Really, Miss North, you are insufferable! Hannah's behavior to me last night was past enduring; but I cannot explain it to you now, Roger. She plainly said, however, that she hated her mother, so I thought a special punishment was absolutely necessary."

"And you put her into the turret room?" said Mr. Cardigan.

"Yes, Roger; certainly."

"When, my dear?"

"Yesterday evening before dinner. Oh, I really forget the exact hour."

"She spent the night there alone?"

"I meant her to. She required a special punishment."

"Come, this is too cruel," said Mr. Cardigan. "Give me the key at once. Miss North, what do you know about the matter?"

"I spent the night near Hannah, and I know that she is ill," said Margaret. "The punishment was too severe; I don't mind saying so, frankly."

"It certainly was," said Mr. Cardigan. "My dear, the key."

He looked at his wife in a way which she dared not oppose. She went to a dressing-table, pulled open a drawer, and took out the key of the turret room and gave it to him.

"Come with me, Miss North, if you will be so kind," he said.

He led the way and the governess followed.

They went up the turret stairs, and a moment afterwards the key was turned in the lock and the door was opened. Hannah was lying full-length on the floor, just between the door and the window, sound asleep. She was sighing in her sleep, and her cheeks were flushed. As her father bent over her she began to talk.

"Don't do it, mother! don't shoot Pip, mother! You

are the cruelest woman in the world! Oh, don't, don't lock me into this room—the Thing will come to me! Oh, mother, you are cruel, and I hate you! Oh, why was I born? Oh, I'll die—I know I'll die!”

A queer look came over Mr. Cardigan's face. He glanced at Miss North, then he looked away as if he did not care to meet her eyes. Then he stooped down and lifted the sick child in his arms.

“Go at once,” he said, turning to the governess, “and ask nurse to get Hannah's bed ready. Why, the child is delirious! Go, Miss North! I will carry her down, and then we'll send for the doctor.”

The governess flew down the stairs. A moment later she found old nurse and told her what had happened.

“Get Hannah's bed ready at once. It will be all right now—I am sure it will be all right,” said Margaret. “And have breakfast ready for her, nurse, and just be with her yourself and pet her, and she will soon get over it. I only fear she has taken an awful chill. I did not know that the night air was pouring in through the window all the time.”

At that moment there was a sound in the passage outside and Mr. Cardigan entered, carrying the sleeping child in his arms.

“Undress her and put her to bed,” he said. He laid the little girl on her nurse's knee.

“Miss North,” he continued, “just one word with you.”

The governess and Mr. Cardigan went into the passage.

“You have seen a very terrible thing, and I am more

pained than I can say. I would beg of you, if possible, not to mention to the other children what has happened. Something must be done for Hannah, and immediately. This state of things cannot go on."

CHAPTER VII

IN THE SHADOW.

When Hannah awoke out of her heavy sleep it was to find herself lying in her own little bed in the nursery. The blinds were down at the windows, and a curtain was drawn also to shut out all light; her blue eyes ached terribly, and she felt hot and restless all over; there were pains in her bones and it hurt her to move. Hannah had never in the whole course of her life known severe physical pain before, and she could not understand what was wrong. It was pleasanter to shut her eyes than to keep them open, so she shut them and tried to collect her little mind. Where was she? Was it the middle of the night? Was nurse lying in her bed by her side?—was Pip in his usual place at the foot of her bed? If he was she would call him, and he might lick her poor hot little face. Oh, how very, very hot it was; how it burned! She tried to kick out her foot in order to attract Pip's attention, but the necessary action caused her such agony that she uttered a short scream and opened her eyes wide. What could be wrong? Who was this grave, quiet, nice-looking girl who was seated by her bedside—what face was this bending over her?

"Are you nurse with a new face?" asked Hannah, looking full into the eyes of Margaret North.

"No, dear, I am Margaret North—you can call me Margaret, if you like. I love you very much, Hannah, so I am sitting with you for a little."

"But why do you sit by me when I am in bed," said Hannah, "isn't it the middle of the night?"

"No, dear; it is quite the middle of the day."

"The middle of the day!" Hannah tried to sit up. "Oh, Pip," she said, "Pip must be hungry, he must want his breakfast." She tried again to sit up, but once more the pains in all her bones forced her to lie quiet.

"What is it; what is the matter?" she said, looking again at Miss North. "Where is Sugar-plum, and where is Pip?"

"Come here, Sugar-plum," said the governess.

The old nurse waddled in her usual fat fashion across the room.

"Now, Miss Hannah, my pet, just you take things quiet, shut your eyes and go to sleep again," said the old woman; "I'll get you some breakfast, if you think you'd like it."

"I don't want to eat, but I'm thirsty," said poor Hannah. "I cannot imagine what has come to me—where is Pip—oh, how my face does burn—where is Pip? I want him to lick it for me."

Nurse looked with a glance of despair at Miss North; Miss North returned her gaze fully.

"I'll do what you want for you, Hannah," she said;

"if your face is very hot, I'll bathe it in warm water."

"But I want Pip. Where is Pip?"

"Say something, miss, for God's sake," whispered the old nurse.

"Where is Pip?—oh, what am I thinking of?—was it a dream? Is nursie—did anybody shoot Pip? Nursie, did anybody say that Pip was to be shot? Tell me, nursie, is it a dream? Speak, speak, oh, speak! I must have my Pip!"

Nurse turned away to hide the tears which filled her eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

"Say something to her, miss," she cried, speaking in a whisper to the governess.

Miss North bent forward.

"Dear little Hannah," she said, "when you are well I will try and get you another dog."

"But I don't want another. So it is true; Pip is shot; it was mother did it; mother, mother—oh! mother, how I—Miss North, where am I? am I up in that room with the Thing? Oh, I know now; I remember everything; I was locked up there and it was cold, and the Thing came in, and I heard the shot fired, and Pip—Pip is dead. Oh, Miss North, Miss North, I wish I were dead too; I wish I were dead!"

"It is all over, Hannah, and you are lying here, and all you have to do is to get well fast as possible, and I am going to stay with you and so is Sugar-plum, and your sisters, Olivia and Celia, may come to see you when you like."

"I don't want them; I don't mind your being here; you stayed with me last night, didn't you?"

"Yes, darling, at the other side of the door."

"Oh, yes, you were so sweet—is that your hand? Can I really hold it now? I held it in a sort of dream all night. Oh, Miss North,—Margaret, I mean,—my face does burn, and my legs ache—oh, what am I to do! what am I to do!"

"Here is the doctor, Miss Hannah; he'll soon give you something to make you better," said Sugar-plum, leading a young man forward at that moment.

His name was Dr. Caird; he was a young man who had lately come to the neighborhood. After a careful examination of little Hannah, which he made with extreme care and tenderness, he told Miss North and the nurse that the child was suffering from a very sharp attack of rheumatic fever.

"She must have got a terrible chill which, joined to some great agitation of mind, has brought on the complaint," he said. "I hope we shall soon have her better, but I fear she will suffer a good deal first."

When Mr. Cardigan heard these tidings he sent for Miss North, and spoke to her very seriously.

"The doctor has told me all about the child," he said; "he seems anxious about her. We ought to have a nurse, ought we not?"

"I have been trained as a nurse," said Margaret, "and the child has taken to me; would you greatly mind if, with the aid of Sugar-plum, I undertook the nursing?"

"It was what I longed to ask," said the father, "but

scarcely liked to. You are a total stranger to us, Miss North, and have come here to be our girls' governess; it seems scarcely fair to ask you to do this."

"It is not a question of fairness," replied Miss North; "it is what I should like to do. Hannah is very ill; she is a curious child, unlike most."

"Yes, unfortunately she is a very queer little mortal."

"She has, I have not the slightest doubt, a very fine character," said Margaret North.

"Oh, do you think so? How happy your words make me! The fact is, I always took to the child, for she seemed such a queer, irresponsible sort of little monkey, and there was a look in her eyes which my mother used to have."

"She has lovely eyes," replied Margaret; "I never saw more beautiful; they are like two pieces of the sky in her little face."

"Indeed, I quite agree with you—they are certainly intensely blue."

"She is a dear little mite," said Margaret, "and as I said before, I love her, and should wish to nurse her just because I do. If Mrs. Cardigan will give her consent, and allow Celia and Olivia to have someone else to teach them for the present, may I not undertake Hannah?"

"I am sure you may with all the will in the world, but I think it might be best for you to get my wife's leave. Will you come with me now to her room?"

Margaret did not enjoy the thought of another interview with Mrs. Cardigan, but she saw no help for it but to comply. Mr. Cardigan led her through what Hannah called the company part of the house; he took her down

the wide marble staircase and across the great broad central hall, the roof of which was also the roof of the house. He led her through one or two drawing-rooms, and at last brought her into a room hung with Liberty silk curtains, and cooled with sunblinds of different descriptions. Here, lying back in a great American rocking chair, a novel on her knee, and her favorite poodle lying at her feet, was the mistress of the house.

"Agnes," said her husband, "I have brought Miss North to see you."

"Indeed," said the lady, scarcely deigning to drop her book, and raising eyes which were half shut, to meet the governess' face, "and what can I do for you, Miss North, pray?"

"It is not a question of what you can do for Miss North, but what Miss North is willing to do for you."

"I fail to understand," said Mrs. Cardigan—she did not offer the governess a chair, and Margaret stood a few feet away.

"I will explain," said Mr. Cardigan. "Miss North, have the goodness to seat yourself; I trust you find that chair comfortable."

"Quite—thank you," answered Margaret.

"Are you in a draught? Yes, I see you are. That would never do; you are a very valuable person at present, Miss North, and we must take care of you. Permit me, I'll just close this door. Now that is better."

Mrs. Cardigan flushed up to the roots of her hair; she looked at Miss North as if she would like to injure her, if that were possible. Margaret returned her gaze

with a steady glance. There was a feeling of pity in her heart—what an awful woman this must be—how terribly life must have spoiled her to make her act in the way she was doing!

“I did not wish to trouble you, Agnes, more particularly as you happened to be so much engaged with our visitors; but now that they have gone, I think it only right to tell you that poor little Hannah——”

“Oh, my dear, I beg of you not to mention that unfortunate child’s name to me.”

“It is absolutely necessary that you should hear about her, Agnes; she took a severe chill in the turret room last night.”

“A severe chill this weather! And I took care to shut the window.”

“Well, it seems the poor child in her agony and misery opened it again—anyhow, the night air was blowing in upon her all during the hours when you, my dear, and I, God help us, were in our comfortable beds. Our poor little child, our baby, our youngest, was in that cruel room, without bed to lie on and exposed to the night air, and in an agony of mind. But for this good, brave girl she might have lost her reason. As it is, I fear, I greatly fear that our little darling may yet lose her life.”

“What!” said Mrs. Cardigan. After all she was not all bad, she did not want Hannah, bad little Hannah to die. She started upright, her novel fell on the ground, the poodle at her feet sniffed at it, and then resumed his nap.

“What!” she cried, “Hannah so ill as that?”

“The doctor has just been.”

"What doctor? Dr. Hudson?"

"No; Hudson is away on his holiday. This is his young partner, Dr. Caird."

"Oh, I think nothing of young doctors—he has probably made a huge mistake—what did he say?"

"He said that Hannah is about to have a very severe attack of rheumatic fever."

"Nonsense! I don't believe it."

"It is a fact, however—the doctor would not say it if he did not know. The child is in agony, her temperature is very high, her face crimson."

"She always had a red face, ugly little thing."

"Agnes! you don't deserve to have a child."

"Don't speak to me like that, Roger; I cannot and will not stand it."

"I don't mean to be unkind to you, my dear. I am sure it was simply because you forgot yourself that you gave the child such a severe punishment. But now to come to the point: Miss North has been more than good to her, the child has taken an immense fancy to Miss North—Miss North has been trained as a nurse—she says that if you will find a substitute to teach the girls she will devote herself to Hannah, and with the aid of Sugar-plum, nurse her through."

"I am sure I don't care, if she really understands nursing—if she chooses to wear herself out——"

"I want to try and do my duty," said Margaret; there was a tremble of mingled feelings in her voice.

"I am sure you will always do that," said the lady, sarcasm in her tone, "you are one of those excellent people

who—but I will say no more. Yes, I shall be very much obliged, that is, if the child is so ill. Perhaps I had better go up and see her.”

“I wish you would, Agnes, I earnestly wish you would; and you might kiss the poor little thing, and tell her—tell her that you forgive her. She is terribly troubled about that poor little mongrel dog you ordered to be shot.”

“Nasty little beast! Do you know, Roger, what Hannah had the impertinence to do? She put that dog on my bed, tied it by a cord, and put a label on the bedpost—oh, I cannot go on—her conduct has been outrageous.”

“The outrageous conduct of a little girl of eight,” said her husband, “is not to be considered under existing circumstances. God help us, Agnes; perhaps we have done wrong by the child from the first.”

“Well, I’ll go and see her,” said Mrs. Cardigan. “I am sure it is very good of you, Miss North, to offer to nurse the child, and anything in the way of increase of salary I will gladly give.”

“I will not be paid extra for what I am doing,” said Margaret; “I am very glad you give me permission to take care of Hannah.”

“Well, I’ll go and see her,” said Mrs. Cardigan. She rose slowly and preceded Miss North out of the room.

The house was so big that it took Mrs. Cardigan from three to four minutes to reach Hannah’s nursery. She opened the door and walked with firm step across the room. Little Hannah was dozing off, but when her mother’s step was heard she began to talk in her dreams, and by the time her mother reached her bedside she had

awakened and was looking at her out of the blue eyes, too bright now.

"Mother," she said, in a low voice under her breath.

"Yes, my dear; I am sorry you are ill, Hannah."

"Did he bite you, mother?" asked the child—there was an eagerness in her tone.

"No, no! Now quiet, Hannah, go to sleep—Miss North is coming to nurse you and you'll soon be better. She does look bad," said the lady, turning round and gazing at her husband, who had followed her into the room.

"Poor little darling!" said the man; "poor little dear!"

But Hannah did not hear her father's voice.

"Did he bite you, mother, and are you going mad? If you are not sure, try to drink water; if you cannot drink then you are going mad, and I shall be happy."

"Little horror!" said the lady. "Do you hear her, even now when she is ill?"

"Oh, my dear, what can you expect? God help you," said her husband, "you are a miserable woman. How you must have treated the child for her to speak to you as she does!"

Mrs. Cardigan left the room. She did not storm at Hannah when she got into the passage, but there was a queer expression in her eyes.

"It is very odd that she should speak to me as she did," she said, "and she is my own child, and I have had four children, and the three elder ones love me; I cannot imagine what is the matter with Hannah. She is like no one else."

But she spoke to empty walls, for Mr. Cardigan had

not followed her out of the room. On the contrary, at Margaret North's directions he was moving poor little Hannah on her bed of pain, and doing what he could to comfort her.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RESURRECTION OF HANNAH.

Hannah had a bad time. Days and days of pain lay before the poor little child—nights and nights during which she had only feverish snatches of sleep, and when all her old life seemed to move before her in a sort of sad procession. The first days that she could remember, her sisters and brother, her old nurse Sugar-plum, then her pets, her canary and Pip—then her father, who sometimes petted her, but very, very seldom; then, last of all, came her mother, who never petted her at all, but always, always scolded her, or called to her to get out of her way, or expressed openly her regret that Hannah was in the world—over and over the poor child saw these people, these things, this little life of her childhood, and day by day she got a little weaker and a little weaker, until at last the doctor said he would like to call in other advice, and when the great doctor from London came, Hannah noticed an unaccustomed figure at her bedside. This was her mother.

Mrs. Cardigan was really alarmed at last. She had never loved Hannah, but she knew quite well that always to her dying day, if Hannah died, she would have an uncomfortable memory. She therefore earnestly desired her

little girl to live. She came close now as the great physician from town bent over the child's bed, but Hannah caught sight of her, and although she was delirious, not knowing in the least what she was doing, she called out in that shrill, piercing voice of hers:

"Did he bite you, mother, and do you think you are going mad? If you aren't quite sure, drink water."

"You had better leave the room," said the husband, turning to the wife and looking at her with pity, "it only excites her to see you. Let me take you to your own room, dear, and I will tell you afterwards what Dr. Murchison says."

Dr. Murchison had but a poor report to give. He was not without hope, but he thought Hannah's little life in great danger; and all during that long, sorrowful night Mrs. Cardigan could not sleep; for once in her life she thought more of Hannah than she did of her poodle, or of her fashionable friends, or of her grand establishment. But early with the dawn of day there came a change for the better in little Hannah. Miss North and her father had been watching by her all night, and poor old Sugar-plum had fallen asleep in the armchair near the child's bed—then with the dawn the little girl fell into an uneasy sleep, which gradually but surely deepened, until the restless movements of the tired-out little body ceased, and the weary eyes were really closed, and dreams, if she had any dreams at all, were too slight, too faint, too indistinct to trouble her.

Hannah slept on and on and on, and with each fresh half hour of sleep Dr. Caird, and Mr. Cardigan, and Margaret

North felt more and more hope, and when the sleep had lasted for hours, and the child's breathing had become regular, and there was a little moisture on her forehead, instead of that hard, dry, dreadful, burning fever, Mr. Cardigan stole from the room and crept into his wife's room, where she was lying with the windows darkened and her face to the wall.

"Agnes," he said, "let us thank God."

"For what?" she said, raising herself on her elbow.
"For what are we to thank God?"

"Because I believe, I do believe that He has spared Hannah's life."

Then Mrs. Cardigan burst into tears.

"I do thank Him," she said, "I thank Him from my heart. Roger, I should never have had another happy moment if the child had died; I should have felt somehow that I had caused her death."

Mr. Cardigan kissed his wife more tenderly than he had done for years, and then he stole back again to the sick-room.

Mrs. Cardigan lay with a comfortable feeling at her heart, and she soon dropped off to sleep.

When little Hannah awoke about the middle of the day the fever had completely left her, and although she was weak to the last degree of weakness, Dr. Caird was sure she would get better. From that day her recovery did set in in earnest, and with the healthy clinging to life which characterizes all little children, in a week's time she was able to sit up, in a fortnight's time she could put her little foot to the floor, and in a month's time Hannah

was once more running about the nursery, and shouting in imperative tones to Miss North.

She loved Margaret North now as she had never before loved any human being. Margaret's least word was law to her, to grieve Margaret was about the sorest punishment she could get. A great deal of her wild old nature seemed to desert the child in her illness. The red had left her complexion too, and she was pale, and with those great wonderful blue eyes she looked almost pretty. But Hannah had not yet seen her mother, nor did Mrs. Cardigan ask once to go to her.

At last the afternoon arrived when the little girl was considered well enough to be moved into the schoolroom. Margaret was most anxious to get her away from the nursery influence. She thought old Sugar-plum a capital creature, but by no means the person to manage a headstrong, determined child like Hannah. She knew that poor little Hannah must be disciplined, that her iron will must be broken in, and she must be taught that in order to show real love she must also give obedience, in order to show real love she must control herself. That iron will of hers must be turned into a right direction.

"She is a splendid little creature," said the governess more than once to Mr. Cardigan. "Did you see how heroically she bore all that torture, never a word out of her, never a murmur; when she was told she must lie motionless how she controlled herself, even though she was delirious. Oh, I shall love to train her; I do hope you won't take her from me."

"I do not wish to," said Mr. Cardigan; "it certainly would not be by my desire."

And then he went into his wife's boudoir, where she was once again lying back in her favorite American rocking-chair, with a novel in her hand and a poodle at her feet.

"Well, Agnes," said her husband, "I think I have quite good news for you this afternoon. Hannah is to be moved into the schoolroom."

Mrs. Cardigan had quite got over her alarm and terror at the prospect of losing Hannah; once more the child was objectionable to her, but she felt that she must now try to bridle her tongue, and not say quite so much against her as she used to do in the old times.

"Indeed," she said, "I am glad she is making such good progress towards recovery."

"It is capital, dear. The doctor thinks in a week's time she may be moved to the seaside. I propose to send her to Margate with Miss North."

"Indeed, Roger, I think Miss North must now undertake the duties for which she came to the Meadows. Olivia and Celia have been doing as best they could, poor dear girls, but of course their studies have been much interrupted."

"That does not matter in the least," said Mr. Cardigan. "We may be thankful we have kept Hannah. It was touch and go, my dear—touch and go. Now the child requires sea air, and I would not part her from Miss North for the world."

"You always were a very obstinate man," said the wife,

looking up at him with a petulant expression on her mouth.

"In this case I am determined," was the answer. "Agnes, what do you say to paying little Hannah a visit this afternoon?"

"My dear Roger, is it necessary?"

"You have not seen her for a month."

"No, but I have heard of her daily, and really the poor child has taken such an unfortunate dislike to me. Don't you remember that day when you supposed she was dying, how she asked me if I were bitten, and if I were likely to go mad? It gave me a shudder; I have not got over it yet. I don't think Hannah deserves to see her mother."

"If we only got our deservings we should all be in a poor way," was Mr. Cardigan's answer. "Indeed, Agnes, it would do the child good to see you. I wish you would make an effort, and go to her in the schoolroom."

"Very well; I will look in some time in the afternoon."

Mr. Cardigan had to be satisfied with this promise, and he left the room suppressing a sigh.

Meanwhile Miss North, by her judicious conduct, by the way she spoke of Hannah, by the influence of her brave words and noble deeds, had caused quite a revolution in the little girl's feeling. It is true that this feeling was not shared by Mrs. Cardigan, but the other members of the household were certainly influenced by it.

On the day when Hannah was to be moved for the first time into the schoolroom, Miss North proposed that

Olivia and Celia, and also Kenneth, should show their satisfaction in some marked way.

"You very nearly lost your little sister," said the governess, "and now I should much like us all to do something to show that we are thankful to God for having spared her to us."

Celia and Olivia had often spoken of Hannah as a nuisance and terribly in the way, but they certainly would not have liked her to die; and during that night when she was so very ill, and when the doctors thought that her little spirit was really going back to the God who had given it, the girls had lain awake and had whispered about her, and had made resolutions that if God spared her they would be good to her in the future, and Kenneth too had been softening towards poor little Hannah; he also felt that he would have a decidedly uncomfortable time if she were to die. So the sisters and brother were glad now that Hannah was to be brought once more amongst them—they were very curious to see her, and when Miss North suggested that the event should be celebrated by a sort of festival they agreed with right good will.

"I want the schoolroom to be made pretty," said Miss North. "Now, who will undertake that? Hannah has a wonderful eye for beauty."

"Oh, Miss North, aren't you imagining a little?" said Celia, raising her brows in astonishment.

"Not at all; I state a fact," said the governess. "Nothing has given Hannah so much pleasure in her illness as the sight of a flower. When her father brought her flowers or when Sugar-plum did so, her eyes always

brightened and she looked pleased, so pleased that I saw at once she had a great eye for beauty. We will place her chair in this window."

"I always sit just here," said Celia.

"On this occasion, dear, I think you must resign the seat in favor of your little sister. We will have the sofa moved into this window, where she can have a view of the gardens and the flowers and the lake. It is a very pretty view; I have often admired it myself."

"I should think it is," said Olivia; "it is quite the prettiest view we have from any window in the house."

"So much the better for Hannah. You will have flowers about the room wherever you can place them—no flowers with too strong scent, however, for Hannah is still very weak. Then I want one of you to go downstairs and ask Mrs. Colles, the housekeeper, if she will let us have a pretty set of tea things to-night."

"What do you mean, Miss North?"

"I mean what I say, dear Olivia; it will have a very very good effect now on Hannah's character if she sees that we make a fuss about her, and are anxious to please her. Is there not a set of white tea things with gold markings, or something simple and pretty of that sort?"

"The most lovely tea things of all are the convolvulus set," cried Celia; "but mother is very particular about them, and we have never used them yet in the school-room."

"Ask your mother from me if we may have them to-night on account of Hannah."

"I wonder if she will let us," said Celia; "I'll run off now and ask her."

Celia was absent about five minutes; when she came back there was a surprised look on her face.

"Mother says we may have the convolvulus tea things, and if you wish it, Miss North, we can always have them in the schoolroom in the future. Isn't it sweet of mother? And we are to have some of the old Russian damask on the table. It is so soft and pretty—mother has got quantities and quantities of it—and we may have flowers, of course, and pretty cakes and fruit."

"All right, girls; I see you know what I want, and I will leave the room to you to get ready. I should like Hannah to have her tea almost immediately after she arrives, for she will be weak and exhausted, and will want nourishment; and we must none of us talk to her too excitedly, for her poor little heart is somewhat weak after the severe attack she has had of rheumatic fever, and she must not talk very much nor very often. Now, is there anything more we can do to make her happy?"

"I wonder, Olivia, if we might do it," said Celia, looking at her sister.

"You mean what we were talking about this morning?" said Olivia.

"Yes, Olivia; have you made up your mind?"

"I think I have," said Olivia.

"What is it, dear; what is your thought?" said Margaret, looking kindly at the pretty girl.

"You know how very fond Hannah is of animals,"

said Olivia, "and last week Miss Marsh at the rectory offered me a Persian kitten. I was wild with delight, and accepted it; I have been training it, and it is a dear little thing. But Celia and I now thought that perhaps—perhaps we might give it to Hannah."

"That is a lovely idea," said Miss North. "I tell you what, we will put a blue ribbon round kitty's neck, and she shall lie on this rug, which is to cover dear little Hannah's legs, and Hannah can stroke pussy and make friends with her while she is having her tea. You are kind sisters, and I am most grateful to you."

Margaret went up to the two girls and kissed them. A moment afterwards she left the room.

"Well, to be sure," exclaimed Kenneth, the moment they were alone, "how topsy-turvy the world is becoming. To think of all this fuss for bad little Hannah."

"Oh, mark my words, she won't be bad little Hannah any more," said Celia, "at least, I mean she won't be called it."

"Nevertheless, it is my fear," continued Kenneth, "that the old Adam will break out, and that bad little Hannah, whether she is called by the name or not, will still remain bad little Hannah."

"Oh, don't abuse her now, Ken; it makes me quite queer to hear you. Really, I never knew there was so much in Hannah. I never saw a nicer girl than Margaret North, and Margaret would not love her as she does if there was not something in her."

"There was a great deal in her," remarked Kenneth. "I never complained of any *want* of things in Hannah; I

only complained of there being too many. But look here, girls, if you are going to give her a kitten, I must do something on my own account. What do you think she would like now?"

"A knife—a knife better than anything," said Celia.

"I suppose she would; she would be sure to cut half her fingers off, or something horrid of that sort."

"She has always been pining for a knife; don't you remember that dreadful old thing she used to try to stab us with when she got into one of her passions," said Celia.

"I could buy one for a shilling," said Kenneth; "I'll go into the village and see what I can do."

He started off on his quest, and the girls amused themselves getting the pretty schoolroom into applepie order. When the right hour arrived little Hannah was carried in by her father and laid upon the sofa in the window which had the lovely view. The girls had not seen her since her illness, and when they looked at the little face which was now drawn and white, and saw the short hair which had been cut almost close to the little round head, and noticed the wonderful look in the big blue eyes, it seemed to them as if they were almost looking at a new Hannah, and that bad little Hannah had really passed through a sort of resurrection.

Both girls went up to her and kissed her very tenderly, and she kissed them, looking at them full in the face.

"Hullo! here I am again!" she said, with an effort to bring a note of drollery into her weak, little tremulous voice; and when she said these words, which were great

favorites with the old Hannah, the girls laughed and felt inclined to cry too.

But now Hannah uttered a sort of little shout, for she suddenly perceived in a basket almost at her feet the prettiest Chinchilla kitten that eyes could rest upon.

"It is a present from Celia and me," said Olivia; "I hope you will like it, Hannah."

"Oh, kitty, come here, come here!" gasped Hannah. She crushed the little creature up in her arms, kissed it several times on its soft head, and then buried it underneath the rug. She did not once even thank the girls, but her attitude and the way she fondled the cat were thanks sufficient.

Kenneth came in at that moment, and offered her the knife.

"I'll cut you with it if you are cross to me," were her thanks, and Kenneth nodded and bent down and kissed her.

"All right, little monkey," he said; "I am glad you are better."

Hannah laughed in a weak sort of nervous way, and then she looked at the view, and then she closed her eyes, and felt that somehow or other she had got into paradise. There was the old little Hannah without doubt, but in new and very happy surroundings.

Tea was a thing of the past—Hannah was feeling refreshed, her family were sitting round her in a worshipful attitude, when the door opened and Mrs. Cardigan appeared. She stood on the threshold for a moment to view the little scene. The sick child on the sofa, the two handsome girls bending over her in a worshipful way,

Kenneth hovering near, and Margaret North with her needle-work, sitting at a little distance off. A more peaceful scene it would have been difficult to find.

Mrs. Cardigan made a slight rustling with her silk dress, and all eyes were turned in her direction; but she could only look at the blue eyes of Hannah, the child who, because of her cruelty, had so nearly gone away.

"I am glad you are better, Hannah," she said, after a pause.

"Thank you, mother," replied Hannah.

Mrs. Cardigan found it very difficult to say anything more. At this moment she was absolutely afraid of Hannah. If Hannah were once more to say: "Do you think you are going mad? If you are not sure, drink water," she felt that she should hate the child for the rest of her life.

But instead of saying anything of the kind Hannah after a moment pulled down the rug, and pointed to the kitten.

"It is mine," she said. "Celia and Olivia gave it, and I have got this knife; I can cut myself if I like, but Kenneth doesn't care. A kitty all for myself and a knife; do you see, do you see?"

"I am very glad indeed, Hannah. Now, what do you say if I—the poodle had pups a fortnight ago—what do you say if I give you one?"

"Oh, *mother!* Oh, please, someone fetch it at once."

"I will go and get it myself," said Mrs. Cardigan.

CHAPTER IX.

HAPPY DAYS.

After this a new era began for little Hannah Cardigan. Instead of being snubbed and always sent out of the way, she was fussed over and made much of. The change, the reaction was so complete that she might have been spoiled the other way round, but Margaret North took care of that. She had no idea of spoiling Hannah, but just now she knew that it was the best possible thing for her character that she should feel she was a person of importance, a person who was loved and made much of. Besides, she was very weak, and her little body required constant care. So day after day Hannah lay on the sofa in the window which commanded the pretty view, and day after day Olivia and Celia chatted with her and praised the poodle's pup and the Chinchilla kitten, and Kenneth used the knife to cut extraordinary animals out of cork for Hannah's benefit, and Hannah laughed weakly, and twitted her brothers and sisters, and said saucy things, and day after day became her brightest and best self.

When a week or a fortnight of this sort of life had gone by, the time came when she was well enough to be moved to the seaside. There was now the place to fix upon, and other arrangements to be made, and just at

the end Celia and Olivia begged very hard to be allowed to accompany Miss North and Hannah. But Mrs. Cardigan had made other plans for the girls—they were to go with her to Carlsbad, to which place she had been ordered on account of her health. They did not much care for this idea, for mother always had friends of her own, and the children were apt to feel rather out of it, and in their heart of hearts they thought that if they had only been allowed to go with Hannah and Margaret, to sit with them on the sands, and help Hannah to build castles and listen to Miss North's stories, they would have a much finer time. But as they were not allowed to choose, they had to make the best of things. Mrs. Cardigan's maid packed the girls' things, and on a certain day in the beginning of August they were all off. Kenneth went to Scotland to spend his holidays with a schoolfellow, the girls and Mrs. Cardigan to Carlsbad, Mr. Cardigan to his moor in Yorkshire for shooting, and Hannah and Miss North to Margate.

Very comfortable rooms were taken for them in the nicest part, and here they spent a month which Hannah never forgot to her dying day. She was allowed to run wild, she was allowed to eat anything she fancied, she was allowed to have her own way morning, noon, and night; and yet all the time she never did a naughty nor a disobedient thing. In the most extraordinary way Miss North's will seemed to be the one only which Hannah cared to follow. Miss North managed all this simply by reading the little girl's character, and seeing exactly what was best for her and exactly what would suit her.

"When she goes home again I must alter all this," thought the governess, "but while she is away she is to be thoroughly happy; she has not had half enough happiness yet in her life—she has to make up for all that now."

So Margaret North laid herself out to entertain Hannah, to pet her, to render her life as like paradise as possible. The mornings they spent on the shore, in the afternoons they drove in one of the little donkey carriages, or joined a party on one of the coaches to see the neighboring country. In the evening they usually went in a boat. The weather happened to be splendid, and each day brought its special pleasure. Hannah lived in the open air, and grew browner and redder in the face than she had ever been before; her hair, too, from having been cut, became very thick and stuck up straight with an audacious, aggressive sort of appearance about it which made people laugh when they saw her. Her thin little limbs put on flesh, and although she had grown tall during her illness, by the time she returned to the Meadows she was as sturdy-looking a child as ever.

Sharp as her illness had been it left no sting behind it, and when at the end of the month it was decided that Hannah and Miss North should return to the Meadows, Hannah was stronger than she had been before.

She had scarcely improved in appearance; she was still plain little Hannah, with a round, round, red, red face, freckles and brown patches from the power of the sun, here and there; light hair whitened by the sea breezes and the salt water, curling black eyelashes, and eyes blue as two bits of the sky. The plainer and more sunburnt the

little face grew, the larger and more intensely blue became the eyes, so that people looked at Hannah once, and then they looked again, for there was something remarkable about her, something droll and irresistible. She was fond of standing with her stout legs somewhat apart, her arms hanging to her sides, her hat pushed far back almost on to her neck, and her determined, resolute face with the rosy lips tightly shut. At these times her blue eyes would be fixed either on the blue sky or the blue sea waves, and a depth of meaning would come into them which would puzzle people, and they would say to themselves: "That plain little girl has got a good deal in her; she has character; we wonder how she will turn out when she is grown up."

Always close to plain little Hannah walked Margaret North, tall, dignified, brown-eyed, with her jolly, handsome frank face. People wondered if the girl and the child were relations, wherever they went they attracted attention; but Margaret on purpose made few or no friends, and at last the delightful time came to an end.

"Well, Hannah, all pleasant things get used up," said Margaret one day. "We are going back to the Meadows to-morrow; are you glad or sorry?"

"I don't know which I am yet," said Hannah. "What is to happen to me when I go back to the Meadows?"

"What do you mean, dear?"

"Well, I have had an awfully jolly time, and it is all owing to you; you are a dear old thing, Margaret, I love you very much indeed. But when I go back it will perhaps be the same as it used to be."

"What do you mean, Hannah?"

"Oh, I'll be sent to the nursery, and I'll have Sugar-plum to take care of me. I am very fond of Sugar-plum, but—but—you know they *used* to hate me, and I don't wonder, for I suppose I was an awfully bad little kid; wasn't I, Margaret?"

"You certainly were not very good, dear."

Hannah knitted her light brows; she fixed her eyes full on her governess's face.

"Then how was it when you came to the house you began to love me the very first minute?" she asked.

"Because I saw something underneath all the naughtiness."

"Now, I wonder what that was," said Hannah, laying her hands determinedly on the table, "what did you see, Margaret?"

"I saw that you had a great deal of affection in you."

"Affection—what is that?"

"The power of loving."

Hannah looked at Miss North; she wanted to fall upon her and hug her, but she restrained herself.

"I won't do, you know what," she said, "if you'll only speak quickly."

"No, don't, Hannah, for I have got on a clean collar and a freshly washed blouse; restrain your feelings, darling; I quite understand that you love me."

"I'd be a horrid donkey if I didn't. But I want to know how you found it out the first *minute* you looked at me."

"I saw it in your hungry eyes, and I read it somehow

in the expression of your face, and I took a fancy to you; for once, Hannah, long, long ago, I was a child very like you."

"Oh, now, you're going to be real 'licious," said Hannah, "you are going to talk of the time when you was young."

"No, I am not; you are not ready yet to hear that story; but I only want to assure you that you have my full sympathy. You went through a dreadful time, and you became very ill, and then you got better."

"Oh, it was worth being ill; I wouldn't mind going through it again; I found out lots of things then."

"Yes, that's just it; you found out lots of things, you found out that people didn't hate you."

"No, and that was because of you; if you hadn't been there people would have gone on hating me, and most likely I'd have died. I'd be dead little Hannah now."

"Well, we are going back to-morrow," said Margaret, rising from her seat as she spoke; "we are going back to a new life."

"What do you mean, Margaret?"

"I mean that what we began at home when you were ill, and what we carried on here at dear, delightful Margate——"

"Oh, yes; dear, delightful Margate!" said Hannah, clasping her hands in ecstasy, "and the sea, the sea, and the shells on the beach, and the shrimps, Margaret, the shrimps for tea."

"Yes, we'll have all those things to look back upon," said Margaret. "I have enjoyed my month as much as

you have, but good things always do come to an end, don't they?"

"Suppose so—horrid!" said Hannah.

"And now we are going back again; but we will carry some of our good things with us; that is what I was wanting to say, Hannah."

"It isn't a sort of lecture you're beginning to give me, is it?" said Hannah, knitting her brow and looking anxiously at Margaret.

"No, no, I never lecture; I don't think it is a good plan. Of course I talk."

"Oh, yes! of course you talk," said Hannah.

"Well, I mean I talk to you just as if we were comrades."

"Yes, same as if we were comrades," said Hannah, uttering a sigh of great satisfaction. "What can I do for you, Margaret? Is anything troubling you?"

"There is nothing troubling me on my own account," said Margaret, "but I have a great many anxious thoughts with regard to you, little Hannah."

"You think I'll be bad little Hannah once again?"

"I hope not."

"But I 'spect I shall," said Hannah, nodding her head and looking intensely wise. "I shan't make concealments from you, Margaret, and I 'spect I shall. If they all begin to tease me, why, you know it is all there"—she patted her heart as she spoke.

"Well, we have got to root it out," said Margaret.

"Root it out! That will hurt, won't it?"

"I am afraid it will a good bit; but if you're a brave girl you won't mind that."

"If I am a brave girl I won't mind," repeated Hannah; "seems to me we *are* having a lecture; let us go out and have a run on the sands."

"One moment, and we will, Hannah. I want you every day of your life to make a good fight to get the bad little Hannah out, and to make the good little Hannah come in."

"How am I to do it?"

"You must ask God, darling. Don't you remember, when you were so ill you were very glad when I knelt by you and asked God to help you; don't you remember?"

"Yes, and the pain wasn't so bad afterwards," said Hannah; "I remember."

"Well, that sort of pain is all over; but there is the pain of trying to do right, and Hannah, the road is up-hill all the way, remember. If every day you try to conquer one little naughtiness, why, you will have got up-hill a bit."

"Look here, Margaret," said the child. She ran up to her governess and laid her hand on her knee; "will you help me? are you going to be my governess?"

"I mean to ask your mother to let me have the charge of you."

"Then I think I'll be good. When I look into your eyes it is not a bit difficult. I'll tell you why I'll be good."

"Why, darling?"

"Because I love you. It isn't hard to be good to a person whom you love, and I love you, Margaret, and I am going to be good for your sake."

"Then that is the best motive of all," said Margaret; "and if in addition to that you ask God to help you I believe we'll do fine."

"We'll do fine," said Hannah. "Now, shall we go out and have a play on the sands?"

"Yes, yes! Put on your hat."

"That sailor hat with a tear in the brim?"

"Bring it to me and I'll mend it; you're a dreadful child."

Margaret mended the hat, and Hannah stood by and laughed and chatted, and then they went out on the sands, and there was no more talk of her being good or bad, and Margaret seemed to have no more cares than Hannah herself.

The long, happy day came to an end, and Hannah went early to bed, to sleep without waking until the morning. The last morning arrived. They had breakfast as usual, then all their belongings were packed, and at twelve o'clock they bade good-by to their landlady, and were driven to the station. At four o'clock they found themselves once more back at the Meadows. Hannah ran right up to the room where Sugar-plum was awaiting her. The old woman was seated just in her old place. She was mending stockings and putting buttons on pillow covers, as she was always doing. It seemed to Hannah as if stockings never, never got mended, and as if pillow covers always required new buttons, for Sugar-plum was always employed in that way.

She rushed up to the old woman now, flung her arms round her neck, and kissed her two or three times.

"So you're back. Well, I declare, you do look bonny," said nurse.

"Oh, I am ever so strong, nurse; look at my legs; you feel them, nurse; aren't they hard? and you feel my arms. Margaret North taught me to box. I can almost knock her down, and she is going to teach me fencing, and I am to play tennis, and to learn cricket. She says that a big girl like me wants lots and lots of exercise. Oh, Sugar-plum, I do love Margaret North."

"She is a dear young lady, God bless her," said the nurse; but nurse's face was anxious, and she looked at Hannah thoughtfully.

"So you're right glad to be back with us, little girl?" she said.

"I am if you'll all treat me nicely; but oh, I must not talk of that. Nurse, did you ever know that the road was all up-hill; isn't it rather unfair?"

"What on earth do you mean, child?"

"But isn't it, nurse? It might be down-hill a little sometimes just to ease your legs; don't you think so?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Miss North says the road is up-hill all the way."

"Oh, maybe it is a sort of a parable she's telling you, poor blessed lamb," said the old woman to herself; then she continued: "Yes, of course it is quite right; it should be up-hill—why, it is only the wicked that goes down-hill. I'm right glad, dearie, if your feet is set in the narrow way."

"No, they aren't set in any way," said Hannah. "This sounds awfully like a lecture; please don't go on."

Nurse petted her little charge, and kissed her, and the two had tea together, for Margaret North had a good deal to attend to. There was a long letter from Mrs. Cardigan. It was this letter which the governess had already read, and which was troubling her a good deal. It was on account of this letter that the anxious look was on Sugarplum's face.

For Mrs. Cardigan had written as follows:

"DEAR MISS NORTH: You will, I know, be returning to the Meadows on September 1, and I write this letter in order that you should receive it the moment you get home. The girls and I will not be back until the middle of September at the soonest. The baths here are doing me much good, and I hope to be quite strong and well when I return home. I shall then be glad if you will take up the education of my two dear eldest darlings, which has been so sadly interrupted during Hannah's illness. From your last accounts the child seems to have quite recovered, and I write now to say that I have made all arrangements, and she is to go to school on September 8. The school in question begins a little sooner than most, but that is all the better. It is by the seaside, and is a very healthy place, and there will be the right degree of discipline, so that Hannah will be trained to overcome those faults which have made her such a trial to her family in the past.

In taking her from you I do so with a certain amount of regret, and always as long as I live I shall feel grateful to you for what you have done for the little girl; but I believe all the same that school life will be best for Han-

nah, and her father and I have agreed that she shall join Mrs. Marshal's establishment at Cumnor West on September 8. I have given nurse directions with regard to her outfit; she is to have everything neat, but nothing gaudy. Mrs. Marshal is a splendid disciplinarian, and I anticipate much benefit for the child from her school life."

CHAPTER X.

NAMING THE PETS.

Margaret read this letter over several times. The more she read it, the less she liked it. She knew something of the school which Mrs. Cardigan had mentioned. The headmistress was old-fashioned, and a very strict disciplinarian. Several girls had gone there and had derived benefit, but they were not girls in the least like Hannah. The school at Cumnor West was just the place to draw out those faults which Margaret North had been trying so hard to eradicate. She felt almost distracted. She dare not tell Hannah on that first evening about the fate which awaited her. As Olivia and Celia and Kenneth were away, the little girl found that even at home at the Meadows she could still have a delightful share of her own way. Nobody was cross to her; the poodle's pup had grown large and fat and strong. It came waddling and dancing and curvetting to meet its little mistress. The Chinchilla kitten had lost none of its playful ways; it spat at the poodle's pup and backed into a saucer of milk, upsetting it, and causing Hannah to laugh heartily. She said that she had not yet named her pets, and would perform that important function soon after supper.

She and Margaret sat together then in the twilight,

Hannah's arms clasped tightly round Margaret's neck, Hannah's red face reclining on Margaret's shoulder, and Hannah's blue eyes fixed on the governess' face.

"Oh, I do love you," said Hannah; "you're so cozy and so jolly, and I like your sort of face, so firm and so brown, and your eyes look kind. I don't mind going up-hill, I don't mind doing anything nasty and unpleasant, if I am to be always with you, dear, dear Margaret."

Margaret clasped the little creature very tightly to her heart, and a great spasm of pain went through her. If only little Hannah really belonged to her; but alas! she had little or no control over the poor child. She knew Mrs. Cardigan well enough by now to be quite certain that she would not alter her plans. It was arranged that Hannah was to go to Cumnor West, she was to be put under Mrs. Marshal's care; God only knew how the poor child would stand the new life.

"I will not tell her to-night," said Margaret to herself. "To-morrow she must know, and I will help her all I can, poor little dear, before she goes."

"What are you so solemn about?" said Hannah, giving Margaret's cheek a little pat. "Speak, why don't you talk to me?"

"What do you want me to say, Hannah?"

"Choose a name this minute for puppy."

"Well, let us think," said Margaret; "it is a dear little round ball, isn't it, Hannah?"

"Yes, isn't it, Margaret? and isn't his hair nice and puffy and fluffy. I don't think I want him to be cut into the queer shape of his poor old mother."

"Well, he is a great deal too young to think of that sort of thing yet," said Margaret, "but now the name, Hannah, the name."

"Suppose we call him Roly-poly," said Hannah, after a pause.

"A very good idea," answered Margaret. "Roly-poly, come here."

"We can call him Roly for short," continued Hannah.

"Excellent," replied Margaret.

"Well, then, his name is settled; it is Roly-poly. Roly-poly, my darling, you have just got your name; now I hope you'll be a dear wise duck of a dog, and that you'll love me and Margaret and no one else in the wide world."

"Oh Hannah, isn't that a little selfish?"

"I can't help it, I'm going to be selfish about Roly-poly," said Hannah, in a voice of calm decision.

"Very well, dear; I cannot expect you to be perfect just yet."

"Oh, Margaret, what a great big sigh."

"It is nothing, love."

"You are not really angry?"

"Not a bit, my dear."

"Now, then, Margaret, don't look so thoughtful; I don't like that sort of look in your eyes, for I know it means lectures, and I'm not going to be lectured on the first night when I come back. I mean to be awfully good, and to learn my lessons so carefully for you, Margaret, and I'll try to be patient with Celia and Olivia, and when I feel the naughtiness bubbling up—oh, Margaret, you don't know how it bubbles up. It seems to get stronger

and stronger, until I feel madlike, and I must do something desperate; but when I look at you and feel it bubbling up, I'll just go away into the shrubbery, far, far back, and scream as loud as ever I can."

"What in the world for, Hannah?"

"It always makes me feel better," answered Hannah. "I know where I'll go; the place is nearly a quarter of a mile from the house; it is in the very center of the shrubbery; there is a sort of little dip down in the ground; I believe it was a quarry once, and they dug stones out. Perhaps some of the house is built with the stones, but now there is a quarry just in the center of the plantation, and I'll go there and scream; I often did before; I used to scream away, and nobody ever found out. I'd have gone mad if I hadn't had Screaming Quarry. You'll let me go, won't you, Margaret?"

Margaret did not say anything.

"Margaret, why don't you talk?" Hannah gave Margaret's cheek a little pinch.

"Yes, dear?"

"You do look so horrid thoughtful."

"I was thinking that I hoped you'd have no need to go there."

"Perhaps I won't, but I think I shall. When I see Celia looking cheeky, and Olivia so pursed up and proper, and fine-ladyish, and Kenneth—oh, Kenneth *is* the boy to aggravate a girl! When I see all this I'll have to go off to Screaming Quarry, or I don't know what will happen to me."

Margaret made no answer, and Hannah began softly to

stroke down the cheek which was nearest to her.

"It is so pretty," she said, "just with that color in the middle, and that nice brown tint all round. Oh, Margaret, you are a darling, a perfect darling. I can't think how God happened to make you so nice. He doesn't make most people as nice as you, does He, Margaret?"

"I don't know, darling—oh, yes, I am sure He does many, many people; you have only seen a few people in the world as yet, Hannah. But now let us think of kitty; we have not given her a name yet."

"But I have thought of one," said Hannah; "she shall be Fuzzy-wuz."

"Fuzzywuz, Hannah?"

"Yes, 'cos she looks like it; you see how all her fur stands up straight—oh, yes, Fuzzy-wuz is her name. Roly-poly and Fuzy-wuz, come here. Fuzzy-wuz, let me pet you."

The kitten darted away, however, and Hannah sprang from her seat by Miss North's side to chase her round the garden.

At last the little girl's bedtime came, and still quite unconscious of the dark news which was so near, she went happily to her rest.

Miss North was seated in her own room late that evening, when there came a tap at the door. She said, "Come in," and old Sugar-plum entered.

"Miss North," said the old woman, "is there no way to get out of this for the dear little lamb?"

"Sit down, Sugar-plum; I am very glad to talk to you," said Margaret.

"Oh, Miss, I can't stay; if Miss Hannah should wake she'd be sure to miss me. She sighed terribly, poor little lamb, when she got into her bed, and she said to me, so earnestlike:

"'Nursie, you *don't* think the old times are coming back, you don't think when they return that they'll hate me, and call me bad little Hannah again?'"

"'No, no, dear,' I said, 'I am sure they won't,' and then she went to sleep, holding my hand in hers. The last, the very last thing she said to me was, 'I do love Margaret North.'

"It is cruel, miss, to take her from you."

"But I am afraid that there is no help for it," said Margaret, looking as sad as old Sugar-plum could desire.

"If the master was at home something might be done, miss. When I got the mistress' letter I had a good mind to go straight off to Yorkshire and see Mr. Cardigan, and ask him to interfere; for he has taken up Miss Hannah wonderful since you had the charge of her. I never saw a man so took up with a child before, and he thinks so highly of the way you manage her, miss, that I am sure he'd do anything you wished. Why shouldn't you be Miss Hannah's governess, and let the two grown-up young ladies have someone else to look after them?"

"Oh, I could manage all three easily," said Margaret, "I should not mind in the very least. You might look after Hannah's clothes, and then if Mrs. Cardigan wished she could share my room. I have become so fond of the child that I do not mind what I do for her."

"Well, miss, it would go sore with me to give her up to you; but I'd rather do that a thousand times—although

I have had her all through her teething—than see her sent out of the house as if she did not belong to it. To send a blessed lamb with her strong feelings and her passions straight into a school, it don't seem right, Miss North, it don't."

"I wish I could prevent it," said Margaret, "but, nurse, I tell you plainly that I do not see any way out of it."

"Nor do I, miss, but I do wish that Mr. Cardigan was at home."

"There is no chance of his coming, I fear," said Margaret.

"Not the least bit, unless—couldn't you send him a telegram?"

"Oh, I could not do that; it would not be right. Mrs. Cardigan would never forgive me."

"I suppose it wouldn't do, miss; then there's no help for it?"

"I am afraid so."

"I suppose you'll break it to the child to-morrow morning, miss?"

"I think I ought. You and I must prepare her all we can for what is before her."

"Oh, miss, I must leave it all to you, for I couldn't abide to speak of it; I never could manage her as you do. You seem to have got at her heart, and to be able to pull her any way you like. She don't know it, miss, but you has her in silken chains, that's about it."

The old nurse took out her handkerchief and applied it to her eyes, which were wet with tears.

"She is the dearest mite in the world for all her naughty ways," she continued; "there's nothing I would not do for

her, nothing. She has worried me almost to the verge of the grave; but no matter, she's Miss Hannah, and oh, Miss North, she has been treated shameful, shameful! She'd be a splendid child if she had a different mother."

"That is quite true," answered Margaret, "although I have no right to speak against Mrs. Cardigan, for she has always been kind to me. But I certainly did hope after Hannah got better that she would understand her a little more, or at least leave her with me."

"I expect you have made her jealous, miss, and she wants to take the child away from you. Well, well, there's no use in struggling against it, miss; it seems to be fate, don't it?"

"Yes; for a time Hannah must bear it; but I am quite certain that if her health breaks down her father will insist on her being removed. You see, nurse, I am not going away; I shall have the care of the young ladies when they return, and I'll get Hannah to write to me, and when I am having my holidays—and I am promised some at the half term—I shall make a point of going to see the child, and then, if her health is suffering, I should think it very wrong not to tell Mr. Cardigan."

"Well, miss, that's better than nothing, and I thank you for what you intend to do. Then I suppose I must be putting her little clothes in order in the morning?"

"Yes, nurse, there is no time to lose; and I will tell her after breakfast."

The nurse went slowly away, and Margaret, notwithstanding all her efforts to the contrary, spent an almost sleepless night.

The next morning Hannah breakfasted in the nursery, but almost immediately afterwards she joined her governess.

"Come out, dear, darling Margaret," said Hannah, bounding into the room, "it is such a lovely 'licious day. I'll show you all my secret haunts if you'll come with me. You shall see Screaming Quarry and all the other places."

"Why, Hannah, are there any other places?"

"Oh, aren't there—you never found Screaming Quarry, did you?"

"Certainly not, dear child."

"Well, you shall see it to-day, and I'll show you just where I plant my feet. Would you like me to yell out when I'm there, just for you to hear what it is like, Margaret?"

"I think I'd rather not, Hannah, for from your description it must be a very loud noise, and it might break the drum of my ear."

"Oh, what fun! I wish you'd let me; but there, I suppose I must not. I'll show you Screaming Quarry first, and then Lie Down Corner."

"My dear child, what do you mean?"

"It is just at the other end of the shrubbery; it is a little bit of lawn, and there are trees all round—such pretty trees—almost all the trees have flowers. There is honeysuckle, and syringa, and there is purple clematis, and jasmine, twining round the roots of an old oak tree, and there is wild convolvulus. I know all the names 'cos I love the flowers so very, very, *very* much, and just in the middle there is a lovely bit of grass—it is not much longer

than I am nor much broader, and I call it Lie Down Corner; for when I have been in Screaming Quarry I always have to rush to Lie Down Corner to get quiet and go to sleep. You don't know what those two places have been to me, Margaret; you don't, you don't truly."

CHAPTER XI.

THE MINUTES AND SECONDS.

“And have you any other pet places, Hannah?”

“Oh, yes, I have Run Down Hill. It is a perfectly darling spot. You see that mound away to your right. Well, that is Run Down Hill. I creep up to the top, and then I let myself go, and whew! hurrah! hurrah! I am at the bottom in no time; oh, it is lovely, just as if I had wings to my feet. I can’t go to Run Down Hill when I am very, very angry; then I have to get into Screaming Quarry, and afterwards I make for Lie Down Corner. But when nothing makes me real mad, I go to Run Down Hill, and have a jolly time. Now, I’ll take Roly-poly and Fuzzy-wuz with me, and see if they’ll scamper after me, and perhaps you would like to come, Margaret?”

“Well, I don’t know, Hannah; I don’t think I could run as fast as you have described. I wonder how many miles you go to the hour?”

“Oh, I can’t tell; I never thought of that; I just let myself go, and away I am. Then there’s the Steep Slide, but that is best in winter. It is not so exciting as Run Down Hill, but in some ways I think it is almost better. I get on a bit of board, and I let myself go. I sit on the board and away I fly. Oh, Margaret, it is the greatest

pleasure of my life to make up names for these places. I don't want anybody in all the wide world when I am racing down Run Down Hill and sliding down Steep Slide. But you shall see them all to-day—come along, come along!”

Hannah tugged Margaret's hand vehemently, and the next moment they were out in the garden. They crossed the garden, which was in its gayest and most brilliant summer dress, and entered the shrubbery at the further end. They walked slowly under the sheltering trees, and presently reached the Quarry which Hannah had so graphically described as Screaming Quarry.

“See, Margaret, I'll jump down, but you can go round by the little path; then you'll meet me in the Quarry, and I'll show you where I plant my feet.”

Margaret obeyed Hannah's directions, and the next moment the two were standing in the Quarry, which was about ten feet deep and was partly overgrown with bindweed, brambles, and other undergrowth.

“It is just here I stand,” said Hannah, “and I throw up my arms, and I open my mouth very, *very* wide. I'll do it—now you can look at me, I won't scream—do you see my mouth; is it very, very wide open, Margaret?”

“Oh, Hannah, what an extraordinary little girl you are!” said Margaret; “but please, please don't let out that awful scream. Why, your mouth is like a huge ‘O.’”

“Is it? I always stretch it out as far as I can. You wouldn't mind just *one* scream, would you?”

“Yes, dear, yes; come away now; I have something to say to you, little Hannah.”

"What is it, Margaret? You look quite grave. I never like you to use that sad sort of tone. If you are going to say anything, do say it here, for if it is bad I can scream out."

"You won't scream out, darling; no, no, it is nothing of that sort. Take my hand, take me to Lie Down Corner."

"Oh, that place is so sweet. You don't know what lovely dreams I have had there, always about fairies and flowers. Come along, Margaret, follow me; we'll just go round this little bit. No one else knows anything about Lie Down Corner."

Hannah went on in front, and Margaret followed. The path was very narrow, and Margaret had to hold in her summer dress to prevent its being torn by the brambles, which grew in wild profusion at each side of the narrow path. At last the path widened a very little, and then she saw just in front of her honeysuckle and clematis and other sweet flowering things, and then Hannah, who had gone on in front, pulled aside the honeysuckle, and Margaret stepped in under a sort of arch. Inside she found herself surrounded by greenery, and under her feet was the softest, most lovely grass—grass which for some extraordinary reason did not look like the rest of the grass around: it was verdant and soft as the softest moss.

"Isn't it perfect," said Hannah; "isn't it the dearest place in all the world?"

"Yes, it is peaceful," said Margaret; "it is just the place we want. I am going to sit here. Why, it would not be long enough for me to lie down. What a tiny, tiny little nook it is, but there is just sufficient room on this lovely

grass for us both to sit. I will sit here, and you shall sit by my side. Now, see! I am going to put my arm round you. Are you quite cozy, Hannah?"

"Lovely; I feel 'licious," said Hannah. She gave a profound sigh, and looked up into Margaret's face.

"I always made a sort of a promise to myself that I'd never show anybody Lie Down Corner," continued the little girl, "but I have broken it when I brought you here."

"I am glad you brought me here, little Hannah; it is a dear place; I shall think of you if I come here another time."

"You won't come here without me, will you, Margaret?"

"You don't mind if I do, do you?"

"Well, I don't know—I don't know why you should come without me. I can come with you whenever you like; I am not to learn a great many lessons, am I, and it wouldn't be really the happy, happy Lie Down Corner without Hannah, would it, Margaret?"

"No, dear, it would not; but all the same I may come here without you. Hannah, I have got something to tell you."

"What?" asked Hannah. Her little heart began to beat very hard, the color rushed in a deeper crimson than usual to her face—she clutched hold of Margaret's hand.

"Something bad, is it?" she asked.

"I am afraid you will think it so."

"Did you bring me here to tell it to me?"

"Not, perhaps, on purpose; but it is a good place to tell it to you in. Hold my hand tight; I shan't mind, even if you hurt me."

"Speak, Margaret! I hate being kept on the twitters; tell me at once what it is."

"Hannah, darling, it is bad naws, and I hate telling you. Your mother has decided that you are to go——"

"Where, Margaret? Do speak—speak."

"That you are to go, little Hannah, to—to school."

"To a day school?"

"No; to a boarding school."

"Away from you, Margaret?"

"I am afraid so, Hannah."

"And when, Margaret?"

"Within a week from now."

"A week—that is seven days."

"Yes, seven days."

"How many hours do you think, Margaret?"

"I must count, darling—seven times twenty-four—one hundred and sixty-eight hours."

"That's a lot, isn't it, Margaret?"

"Yes, a good many, if you count by hours, Hannah."

"And how many minutes, I wonder?"

"Dearest, I am not a sufficiently good arithmetician to give you the minutes just now, but I'll make a little sum of it all when we go back to the house."

"I wish you would—a whole week, seven days, one hundred and sixty-eight hours, a whole lot of minutes, a tremendous lot of seconds, I 'spect."

"Certainly, Hannah, certainly."

"And I'll be with you *all* the time, till I go?"

"Yes, love."

"Then I'll try not to cry."

"You are a very, very brave little girl, and I am very proud of you."

"It is quite certain I am to go, I suppose, Margaret?"

"I am afraid so, dear."

"Is it mother who has settled it?"

"Yes, my child, your mother wishes it."

"And you'll stay here with Olivia and Celia?"

"Yes."

"And bad little Hannah will be out of the house?"

"Yes."

"I see; I understand."

Hannah was quite silent for a moment; she rested her chin upon her two hands, her two hands were placed against Margaret's shoulder, her eyes looked past Margaret's into the flowering shrubs which surrounded her. Margaret wondered what she was thinking of, her blue eyes were very wide open and very grave, there was not even a suspicion of tears in them. Suddenly she sprang to her feet.

"Don't let us think of it," she said; "it is an awful, awful way off—don't let us think of the days nor the hours, but only of the heaps and heaps and bundles of seconds; it is an awful way off, don't you think so, Margaret?"

"By seconds it certainly is, but seconds fly fast, Hannah."

"Never mind—there's a lot of them to fly. They are sort of little fairies, aren't they, Margaret?"

"Well, darling, you can think of them in that way if you like."

"With wings something like gnats," continued Hannah. "Oh, there are such a lot of them, quite a cloud, and they'll go on flying past and flying past for seven days and seven nights. I won't think of school, I am going to be awfully happy all that long, long, *long* time. Please, Margaret, tell Sugar-plum not to talk of school, and you won't talk of school either, will you?"

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, Hannah; you are a very brave child."

"Please don't talk of that; it seems to prick at my heart."

"I won't again; but we will make a compact, you and I; we won't talk of school to-day or to-morrow."

"That's two days," said Hannah, beginning to count on her fingers.

"Nor the next day."

"Three," interrupted Hannah.

"Nor the next day."

"Four," cried Hannah.

"Nor the next after that."

"Five," said Hannah.

"But the day after that, the sixth day, I think we ought to talk about it, Hannah."

Hannah gave a little shiver; it ran right down from her head to the tips of her toes. It seemed even to catch her breath.

"All right," she said, after a pause; "we need not say much, need we, on the sixth day?"

"We will talk it out on the sixth day, Hannah; we will be brave, and we'll face it. I'll make up a plan which I

think can help you when you are at school, but you are not to know anything about it till the sixth day."

"That's all right; there's one, two, three, four, five lovely days to come first. Oh, Margaret, I am so happy! Now let us go on, and I'll show you Run Down Hill and Steep Slide. Margaret, you have lots to see, and we'll be all by our two selves for five beautiful days."

During the rest of that day Hannah would not allow even the shadow of a care to approach her. Margaret wondered how the child managed. She talked a little more than usual, it is true, and was perhaps a little more reckless, and laughed rather more than she had done at Margate, but as far as Margaret could see she was really enjoying herself. She ate her meals heartily and kissed and hugged Sugar-plum, and made a great fuss over Roly-poly and Fuzzy-wuz. She clung close to Margaret too, insisting on sitting almost in her pocket at meals, and holding her hand whenever she had a chance. It was not until she was going to bed that she alluded to the subject of the school.

"I had a 'licious day," she said, "but, Margaret, you won't forget; you'll have the number of the seconds all done out neatly on a bit of paper for me to see in the morning. I am going to tick them off day by day, and then I'll know exactly how I am going. I has a lot more to live through, hasn't I, Margaret?"

"Yes, my pet, a great many more minutes and seconds."

Then Hannah hugged her governess and went off to her rest.

During that night she slept soundly, and both Sugar-

plum and Margaret were much relieved at the sensible way in which she was taking the great news. There came a tug of war, however, and a frown on Hannah's face when her new clothes had to be tried on. Margaret determined that these should be as pretty as possible. She wanted the queer, eccentric little face to look its best, not its worst. So she helped nurse, when the child had gone to bed, to make up pretty frocks for her, and she herself insisted on buying colored ribbons and gay sashes for Hannah to wear, and she saw that her boots were neat and pretty, and that she had plenty of gloves, and that her washing hats were of that sort which would show off those blue, blue eyes to the best advantage. But Hannah, who had never given a thought to dress in the whole course of her life, was much annoyed by these many interruptions.

"I don't want to ask what they are for," she said, "but they do seem to take up a lot of the precious seconds. Oh, don't mind that little wrinkle, nursie—I like wrinkles—and don't mind the sleeve being tight under my arm; don't wait to let it out, nursie. Oh, the seconds is flying; they is, they is."

The clothes were completed without annoying Hannah too much, and the days flew on.

CHAPTER XII.

BE BRAVE!

At last the morning of the sixth day dawned. Early on the following day Hannah, under Margaret's charge, was to start for Cumnor West. Margaret had been desired by Mrs. Cardigan to take the child herself to school. This thought comforted Hannah not a little, and as Margaret knew a great deal of school life, having spent most of her young life there, she was able to give Hannah all the information she wanted to know. But, true to the child's request, she did not mention the subject during the days one, two, three, four, and five.

On the morning of the sixth day Hannah came down to breakfast looking, as nurse expressed it, grumpy. She had been very impatient while she was being dressed, and had screamed when nurse tried to brush out her short mop of hair. She had put on her pinafore the wrong side out, too, and one of her stockings shared the same fate. When nurse tried to rectify this Hannah had given her a sharp, resounding slap upon her cheek, and had not been sorry afterwards. Now it was not Hannah's way ever to be cross to Sugar-plum, and poor Sugar-plum wondered, and the tears came into her eyes. Hannah saw the tears, but they only made her feel, as she had herself expressed

it, "badder than ever." She had not been feeling bad for long weeks now, and the sensation was quite painful. She began to give way to the old reckless thoughts, and did not struggle against them. Sugar-plum told her she was not to run on the grass until after breakfast, as the dew was too heavy, but the next instant Hannah boldly disobeyed her old nurse, and was seen tearing across the lawn accompanied by Fuzzy-wub and Roly-poly. These two little animals scampered and raced after her, and Hannah raced with them in her turn, and presently tumbled down and got her pinafore and frock wet, and came in to breakfast with Margaret, looking a perfect rake of a child. It needed but a moment for Margaret to see what was up—Hannah's heart was so sore that it could not guide her as it ought to do. She was in such pain that she felt defiant. Margaret had no idea of punishing her.

"It is awful to think of a child like that being sent to school," she said to herself. "What am I to do to help the little creature? She is the sort of child who prospers on love, and kindness, and petting. She has had very little of any of the three during her short life."

So Margaret said in the tenderest, sweetest voice: "My dear child, I am so sorry to see you like this. Why, your frock is wet, and so are your stockings. You must not sit in wet stockings, Hannah; it would be dangerous."

"You mean, perhaps, that it would kill me," said Hannah. "I think—I'm not sure, but I think—I'd like that. I'd like to be dead—yes, I would."

"Hannah, darling, when you talk in that way I must

not even listen to you. Just stay where you are, and I'll bring down a clean frock and stockings."

This was not quite so bad as being sent up to the nursery to the tender mercies of old Sugar-plum. Hannah had seen the tears in Sugar-plum's eyes, and had noticed the red patch on her cheek after she had given her that vindictive slap, and neither the sight of the tears nor the red mark had been agreeable, but she had shut away the feeling of remorse, and would not allow it to get the better of her.

"It is just 'cos mother has treated me so unfair," she said to herself; "and the beautiful precious seconds are going by, and we'll have to talk of horrid, horrid, *horrid* school to-day. Oh, I don't mind when Margaret is near, but I can't stand Sugar-plum when I'm not happy. Roly-poly, darling, come here; let me scrooge you up; it is a sort of comfort to scrooge you up."

Hannah caught the little animal in her arms, and performed the operation she called "scrooging" with such telling effect that poor Roly-poly gave a sharp scream.

"I don't mind telling you, Roly-poly, that I'm a horrid little girl; I'm bad little Hannah now, you know; but *you* won't mind, will you, Roly-poly?"

Roly-poly hid under the table, thinking it best to put a little distance between himself and Hannah while she was in this mood, and at the same moment Margaret re-entered the cheerful breakfast-room, carrying a pretty white frock and some dry stockings over her arm.

"Am I to wear that frock?" said Hannah. "Why,

that's my very newest frock. I do like it, though; it is so cool, and comfortable, and baggy."

"And why shouldn't you be cool, and comfortable, and baggy, Hannah?" said Margaret. "Here, slip on the frock; it is going to be a very hot day, although it is September."

"It is going to be a horrid day, I think," said Hannah.

"Stand still, dearest, while I'm hooking up your frock. Why do you think the day is going to be horrid?"

"I don't know; but sometimes I hate the blue sky and the nasty unfair sun."

"Hannah, dear?"

"I do; I'd rather it rained. I like rain-drops, and I like gloomy skies. Don't you think the sun is a very hard-hearted sort of monster; don't you, Margaret?"

"A very dear, delightful friend," said Margaret.

"All right, Margaret; if you think so, you must go on thinking it. Must I put on these stockings? If I had a little bit of a cold or a sore throat, perhaps mother wouldn't want——"

"Come, come, Hannah, you are trying to shirk a difficulty. You have got a hill to climb, and you must climb it, whether you like it or not. Now be brave! You have the bravest heart in the world; put on these stockings and then we'll have breakfast. While we are eating breakfast I am going to tell you my plan."

"Your plan? Is anything pleasant going to happen to-day?"

"Something very pleasant is going to happen; that is, if you won't spoil it."

"Oh, I am sure I won't, if it is anything *you* like, Margaret."

"Put on your stockings, dear, and I'll tell you while we are eating our breakfast."

The thought of something pleasant to hear about caused a distraction, and Hannah put on her stockings quickly, and then seated herself at the breakfast table. She was hungry in spite of her sorrow, and ate the nice things provided with considerable relish. When she was halfway through her second bowl of bread and milk, Margaret said:

"You know that to-day we must talk about——"

"Yes, I know," said Hannah, "about s-c-h-o-o-l."

She said the word, dragging out each letter, until it sounded a very formidable and terrible word to listen to.

"Yes, about school," said Margaret. "I spent several very happy years at school, I think quite the happiest years of my life; but the day I first went, oh, I was so miserable!"

"Were you, really and truly?" said Hannah.

"Yes, my darling, about as miserable as you are now."

"I don't think you could have been. Look here, Margaret, I know we must talk of school to-day, but may I go to Screaming Quarry first?"

"No, no, Hannah! I want you to control yourself. Now, listen to what I have to propose. It is such an exquisite day that I mean it to be, in spite of the sorrow which is coming to-morrow, a very happy day. What do you say if you and I have a little picnic?"

"Oh, Margaret! a picnic, and this is the sixth day?"

"Well, why not; why should we make ourselves miserable because it is the sixth day?"

"Oh, but I don't understand; I thought you said that on the sixth day we were to talk about *it* all the time."

"We will talk about it, but I thought we might go to a very nice place to talk about it in. Now, there's a lovely place called Dingle Dale, five miles from here, and Jervis says we can have the pony cart; and as I know how to drive, I thought we might go by ourselves, just you and I, and we might take Roly-poly and Fuzzy-wuz with us."

"Margaret, do you mean it?"

"Certainly, dearest; that is, if you are agreeable."

"Oh! of course I am; course I am."

"Well, then, hurry up with your breakfast, Hannah, and I'll go and speak to cook. I'll ask her to pack up a delicious little dinner for us, and we will take some matches, and when we get to the wood—for there is a wood in one part of Dingle Dale—we'll gather some dry bits of wood, and make a fire and boil a kettle, and then we'll have a real delightful gypsy tea."

"Oh, aren't you good, Margaret! Margaret, Margaret, to think of this coming on the sixth day!"

"Well, now, Hannah, do you think you would do something first for me? I have been thinking how to give you a little pleasure, and this seems a delightful plan; but will you do something for me?"

"I'll do anything for you, Margaret."

"Please go up to poor old Sugar-plum and give her a kiss just on that red patch on her cheek; I am afraid it is hurting her."

"Did she tell?" asked Hannah, her eyes flashing.

"Tell? There was nothing to tell. I just saw a red patch on her cheek, and she seemed as if she had been crying about something. I supposed it was the parting from you."

"I know, I know!" said Hannah; "I'm off, Margaret, I'm off."

She dashed out of the room, banging the door behind her.

In less than an hour afterwards the pair were on their way to the hastily improvised picnic at Dingle Dale. Margaret chatted, and joked, and laughed, and Fuzzy-wuz and Roly-poly made themselves so intensely ludicrous that, in spite of the sorrow at her heart, Hannah could not help laughing also. She laughed loud and long, and once or twice tears filled her blue eyes. She was letting off steam, however, in a new way, and Margaret encouraged her, knowing that this was far better than a retreat to Screaming Quarry.

By and by they reached the dingle, which was an ideal spot with trees and a flowing stream and flowers, and all those attractions which make rural England the lovely place it is. Margaret and Hannah enjoyed themselves thoroughly. Hannah was never a victim to the troublesome flies which so much detract from the pleasures of woodland scenery. Her very red little face was, perhaps, not attractive to these imps of the wood, and they left her alone. Margaret was also fortunate in this respect, so there was really no drawback to the happiness of the pair. They spread their dinner on a white stone, and, as they

were both hungry, ate heartily. Roly-poly was beginning to learn to beg, and he begged in a waddling, but also in a highly satisfactory style; the kitten got lost several times, and this caused further excitement.

By and by dinner was over, and Margaret and Hannah found themselves seated side by side, a basket of ripe plums between them.

"Now, then," said Margaret, "this is just the time to tell you what I did when I went to school."

Hannah gave a little shiver, then she braced herself up and stared full at Margaret.

"Go on," she said.

"I was about your age—how old are you, Hannah?"

"Eight."

"I was about eight, my mother had died, and I had no friends."

"Don't make it too sad, please, Margaret, or I'll——"

"No, darling, no; only I want just to show you that I had reason for being sad when I went."

"I 'spect so, I 'spect so; I think eight a horrid age. Go on, Margaret; please be quick."

"I went to school; it was not a nice school."

"Like mine, I 'spect," said Hannah.

"Oh, it was a worse school than yours—much worse. In those days people didn't understand quite as much as they do now, and they thought it was well for children to——"

"Oh, I know! you need not go into that; but I think lots of those people are still alive, don't you, Margaret?"

"Perhaps so, Hannah; but there is a great change for

the better, all the same, and I trust you will find it so at Cumnor West."

"It is a horrid name, to begin with," said Hannah, "but go on about when you went."

"I remember the day; it was this time of year, and the driver of the cab put me down with my box just inside the porch, and drove straight away, for he said he had been paid in advance; and there I stood all alone, a poor little girl only eight years old, facing the wide world."

Hannah took hold of one of Margaret's hands, and gave it a tight squeeze.

"Am I scrooging you so much that it hurts you?" she asked.

"No, darling—no."

Margaret paused for a moment.

"This is most 'citing," said Hannah. "I wonder if I'll be left a poor little girl facing the world at Cumnor West?"

"No, no, for I am going with you; I will see that you are comfortably settled before I leave, dear."

"Thank you, Margaret. Well, what happened when the door was opened? was there monsters inside that you read about in fairy tales?"

"There was quite a nice kind lady. She came to the door herself and she stared at me; she did not stare long, she bent down and kissed me, and said: 'What desolate poor little mortal is this?'"

"Then she was a good fairy?"

"She wasn't a fairy; she was a dear, loving, motherly woman. She took me in and kissed me two or three

times, and told me I was to have supper with her; I was so shy I could not utter a word."

"Shy, was you? You are not shy now," said Hannah.

"Oh, I have got over it, dearest; it would not do for a girl to be shy all her days."

"Well, I am not shy," said Hannah; "I always will speak out."

"Yes, and that's a great advantage. I was a very shy little thing, and I kept all my own sorrows locked tightly in my breast."

"And never even a Screaming Quarry to go to?"

"No, Hannah, no, nor Lie Down Corner either; none of the delightful places you have for indulging your feelings in."

"But I won't have them at school, Margaret."

"No; but you'll have other things to distract you. Well, the kind lady, her name was Miss Watson, kept me with her all that evening, and talked to me so sweetly, and told me about the girls, and asked me to be brave; I don't know what she didn't say, but I quite loved her, and then she took me to my room, which I shared with two other girls—I remember their names quite well; one was Katie and the other Annie—and she said when she went into the room: 'Katie and Annie, this is a new little girl, Maggie, and I want you to be very, *very* nice to her, for she is a great friend of mine.' Then Katie kissed me on one cheek, and Annie kissed me on the other, and they said I had better sleep in the bed in the middle."

"The bed in the middle! That sounds funny," said Hannah.

"Well, I slept *thère*, and they *were* so sweet; they did not tease me, as I supposed schoolgirls would, but they crept up close to me, and one girl tucked me in, and the other smoothed my pillow, and they said: 'Good-night, Maggie; good-night, Maggie,' and I fell asleep with Katie's hand resting on my shoulder. She said I was a baby, and that she was going to soothe me off to sleep. She said that every girl in the school would be kind to me."

"I declare it all sounds most 'citing," said Hannah; "I should think you quite liked it."

"I did awfully. I loved those two girls that very night, and I loved Miss Watson; and you know, Hannah, you cannot be very unhappy when you love three people, and they are always with you morning, noon, and night. Well, that is what happened to me at school; that is the account of my first night, the worst night of all, as most children know. And the days that followed, instead of being terrible, as I had pictured them, were quite bright, for I had something to do every hour. Even my playtime was more exciting than most playtimes, for I knew it must come to an end quickly, and I must make the most of it. Then soon I began to long to learn, and one day my master discovered that I had a great talent for music."

"A talent; what's that?" asked Hannah.

"He found that I had got a power in my fingers and a sense in my head which is called an ear, and that if I cultivated the ear and the power in my fingers I should play better than most people; I should make lovely music which would delight those who listened, and do them

good. I should employ a gift which God had given me, to the delight of the world, to the making of the world better."

Hannah did not speak; her blue eyes were fixed on her governess' face.

"And so I 'spect you learned a good bit?" she said, after a pause.

"I did, darling. And now all the time I have been with you I have never once played to you. When we go in to-night I am going to play to you on an instrument which I don't believe you have ever heard."

"What do you call it?"

"Well, I call it by its old-fashioned name, a fiddle; but most people call it a violin. There is something about your face, Hannah, which makes me think that you also have a gift for——"

"What? Oh, Margaret—music? If so——"

"You must practice very hard at school, so as to delight others, as I hope and believe I shall delight you to-night."

"I don't know much about it," said Hannah. "Sometimes I heard it when I was at Margate, and it seemed to give me a lump in my throat."

"I won't make the lump in your throat to-night; but I think I shall give you real pleasure."

"Margaret, I love you, I love you. Is there anything more you want to tell me about your school?"

"Well, yes, just one or two things; and then we won't talk about disagreeables any more, for we have got to see about tea in a moment, you know."

"Yes, yes; oh, do be quick, Margaret! We have got

to collect sticks, haven't we? and I know poor Fuzzy-wuz wants her milk. Come here, little duck of a kitty; she shall have her milk, yes, she shall. Be quick, Margaret; do be quick."

"I found at school," continued Margaret, looking very grave and taking one of Hannah's small, plump yet firm hands in one of her own—"I found at school that if I tried to do right everything went well: the mistresses were fond of me, the pupils liked me, I liked my work, and my long, happy days were fully occupied. But I also found that if I did wrong at school, then I was intensely miserable. It was just as if you took Fuzzy-wuz and rubbed her up the wrong way. See, Hannah, what I mean?"

Margaret stretched out her hand as she spoke, and rubbed up Fuzz-wuz' thick bushy tail. Fuzzy-wuz did not like the operation; she jumped off Hannah's lap and darted into a shrub near by.

"There, now you see what I mean; it is horrid to be rubbed the wrong way."

"Oh, isn't it?" said Hannah. "It makes you want Screaming Quarry and Lie Down Corner so badly that you'll go clean mad if you don't get them."

"But I made a discovery, too," said Margaret, "and that was that it was always my own fault when I was rubbed the wrong way; when I did my best it hardly ever happened. Now, that is what I want you to do at school. Do your best, and determine to be good little Hannah instead of bad little Hannah. You know Who will help you, my dearest little girl."

"You mean God; I can't quite understand, but you always say it."

"He will help you if you ask Him, I know He will. Ask Him very, *very* earnestly, and very, *very* often."

"Oh, Margaret, I do love you."

"And now we need not talk any more about disagreeable things. I should not be surprised if you were happy at school, and when you find things rubbing you the wrong way, just say to yourself: 'It is my own fault, and I'll try and like the things my mistresses want me to like,' and then the horrid feeling will go. Now then, Hannah, jump up; let us have a race and see who will gather the greatest number of sticks for our fire."

Margaret pretended to chase Hannah, and Hannah ran off with peals of laughter.

The rest of the day passed in great peace and happiness. The gypsy tea was even a greater success than the picnic dinner. The two returned to the Meadows in the cool of the evening, Hannah almost dropping asleep from sheer happiness. Just as she was, Margaret lifted her up and carried her into the nursery.

"Sugar-plum, she is dead-tired," said Margaret, "undress her as quickly as you can and put her to bed."

"Oh, poor little lamb! poor little lamb!" said the old woman.

"Never mind, nurse, never mind; she is a brave child; she has a great deal in her, and I believe she will conquer yet."

CHAPTER XIII.

AT SCHOOL.

After all Hannah had been too sleepy the night before to listen to Margaret's violin; but Margaret thought that she might influence her through the power of music all the same; so that evening very late she brought the violin into the day nursery, and asked Sugar-plum to open the doors between the day and night nursery. She had tuned the violin elsewhere, and now she began to play the gentlest, softest music; very distant, very sweet it sounded, and it came into Hannah's dreams, and comforted her in spite of herself.

The next morning the little girl woke up with quite a new feeling in her heart; she was neither cross nor grumpy; she was very affectionate to Sugar-plum, but told her frankly that she did not mean to cry.

"I am going after breakfast," she said; "but now look here, Sugar-plum, I am not going to give you a lot of kisses, nor scroogings, nor anything of that sort. I'll just run up and say good-by quite common; you won't mind, will you, Sugar-plum?"

"No, dear heart, I won't mind."

"Be sure you take care of Fuzzy-wuz and Roly-poly for me. I wish I could take them to school; but there, I

can't. I'm going to be good little Hannah while I am at school; did you happen to know that, Sugar-plum?"

"Well, somehow I thought last night that perhaps you was," said the old woman; "you had such a smiling kind of face when you were asleep."

"Smiling, was I?" said Hannah; "oh, that's 'cos I had a dream."

"Had you, missie; and was it a nice dream?"

"A wonderful and beautiful dream," said Hannah. "I thought an angel came into the room and told me that if I was a real good girl I'd go up to heaven some day and play on a harp, and then he played music for me, very, *very* soft, and he said that was the music of heaven. I never wanted heaven before; I didn't want no harps nor anything of that sort; but now everything is changed. I seem to want heaven and to play on a harp. Well, good-bye, Sugar-plum; I'm off to breakfast. I'm not going to cry a single tear, so don't you 'spect it."

Hannah dashed downstairs; Margaret was waiting for her—a tempting breakfast was on the table. Margaret said they had a splendid day for their short journey, and Hannah said:

"I am glad it is fine, aren't you? I love nice sunny days, don't you, Margaret?"

"Certainly I do, dearest."

"I wonder if it will be nice and 'licious and cozy in the train," said Hannah, as she seated herself with great precision at the breakfast table.

"Why, Hannah, I didn't think you liked trains."

"Oh, that don't matter; people have to do things they

don't like," said Hannah, "or, rather, if they are real good, they like the things that they didn't like when they was bad; isn't that it, Margaret?"

"You are quite a little logician," said Margaret, with a smile.

"What's a logician, Margaret?"

"You'll learn some day; never mind now."

"Margaret, you do look awfully sweet," said Hannah. She smiled at Margaret; her teeth were the white teeth of a little child, they shone like pearls in her small face. She had not begun to get many of her second teeth yet. What with those white teeth and blue eyes, Margaret said to herself that she had seldom seen a more attractive little visage.

Breakfast came to an end, the good-by to Sugar-plum was said quickly and hurriedly, and Hannah, in her new white frock and her pretty washing hat, sat by Margaret's side in the carriage which was to convey them to the station.

Their journey to Cumnor West was performed without any adventure. Hannah chattered all the way, made remarks highly complimentary on the rather ugly scenery through which they passed, said again and again that she loved nice sunny days, and that she thought railway journeys in dusty carriages quite the most delightful things in the world.

Margaret applauded her when she made these remarks, and capped them by some of still greater enthusiasm of her own, and then they found a fly and drove up to the school, which was situated on a rising knoll about two

miles outside the little old-fashioned town of Cumnor West. Far away in the distance could be seen the blue sea: it was not much more than a line on the horizon, but still it was the sea, and Hannah with her long sight could even see the ships as they sailed past.

"I wonder how many miles away it is," she said, with great interest in her voice.

"Four or five miles, I should think," said Margaret; "too far for you to walk, but not too far for a picnic now and then."

"A picnic!" said Hannah. "Oh, I don't want picnics at school; you wouldn't be there."

"But, listen; I intend to come and see you at the half term."

"The half term? Oh, what's that?"

"Well, you know, now it is the fashion at most schools to give a couple of holidays in the middle of the term; they are called the half-term holidays. I intend to come and see you then, and we might go down to the sea, Hannah, and have a picnic."

"Oh, so we might, so we might! But, Margaret, it is a long way off; it is so, so far away that I don't even see it. It is farther off than that sea, Margaret."

"All the same it will come, darling; it only needs a little patience and hard work and a brave heart, and the half term will come."

Hannah squeezed Margaret's hand, and her face grew very red—crimson, indeed, for they had now drawn up outside the porch of the schoolhouse. It was a large building made of stone, and looked as if some parts of it

were very old; there was a garden to the left, some meadows to the right, and a broad, bare avenue which led sheer up to the hall door. There were no creepers anywhere about the house, and Margaret's own private impression was that it looked like an ugly prison. She contrived to praise it, however, to Hannah.

"You will have splendid air here," she said; "why you will get such a strong girl I shan't know you when I come at the half term."

"It's nice to have a school bare, without any creepers or trees, isn't it?" said Hannah, gazing about her with the expression of a connoisseur. "Oh, and the air is quite delightful; I 'spect I'll like school awfully."

As she spoke her color kept coming and going. Margaret watched her uneasily. A servant had opened the door, Hannah's modest little trunk was moved into the hall, which struck cold with its stone flags. The pair were shown into a sitting room to the left of the hall; the maid closed the door and withdrew.

"Mrs. Marshal will be with you in a moment," she said, as she did so.

Hannah's heart was beating hard; she clutched hold of Margaret's hand; then suddenly she flung it away.

"What is the matter, darling?" said Margaret.

"Don't—don't look at me! Turn your back on me for a moment, please, please, Margaret."

"I see some children at the other end of the lawn," began Margaret. "There are a good many of them just about your age. Oh, I do wish I could find a Katie and an Annie for you; then you would be perfectly happy!"

Just at that moment the door was opened, and Mrs. Marshal came in. She bowed to Margaret, and turned at once to survey the new pupil.

"So you are little Hannah Cardigan," she said. "Come here, Hannah, and shake hands."

Hannah advanced slowly, with both her hands clasped behind her back.

"I don't know you, and I don't want to shake hands," she said.

"My dear, I am your mistress, your governess. Hold your hand out at once!"

"Do, Hannah, darling," whispered Margaret behind.

Hannah made a great gulp in her throat, and then held out her fat little hand. Mrs. Marshal took it in both her own, opened it out, and looked at it steadily.

"When you have been with me about a week, Hannah Cardigan," she said, "I trust you will have your nails in respectable condition. At present they are very black and very uneven. Do you bite your nails?"

"I don't," said Hannah.

"Gently, gently, my dear child!"

"Hannah has not been very well lately, or I would have seen to all that," said Margaret.

"I know all that story," said Mrs. Marshal. "Mrs. Cardigan paid me a visit before she left for Carlsbad; but Hannah has quite recovered now. It will be my endeavor, my dear little girl, to make you good, neat, orderly, and learned. Now those are four important things for a child to be. Can you repeat them after me?"

"No, I can't," said Hannah. "I wasn't listening."

"My dear little Hannah! Now, I will say them again. You come to school to be made *good, neat, orderly, and learned.*"

"Then I 'spect you'll soon find that I am——"

"Oh, don't, Hannah!" interrupted Margaret. "You know you promised me that you would be all those four things. I am sure she will do just what you wish, Mrs. Marshal."

"Well, I trust so. Will you come into the drawing room with me, Miss North? I think tea has been served there."

"If I may bring Hannah with me," said Margaret; "if not, I would rather have tea with her."

"Hannah will have to join the school tea."

"Are there any of her companions to whom I might specially introduce the little child before I leave her?" said Margaret.

"Well, there are the girls in whose room she is going to sleep. Sophy Colchester, Agnes Parr, Mary Cholmondeley, and Rose Perrott."

Hannah opened her eyes, and looked intensely interested.

"I like the name of Rose," she said, after a pause.

"Little girls should be seen and not heard," said Mrs. Marshal, glancing with darkening brows at the small new arrival.

"Hannah will keep all the rules to-morrow, I have not the least doubt," said Margaret. "Of course at first they are strange to her; she has not been well, and she has

never been at school before. I should like to see you for a moment or two by yourself, Mrs. Marshal."

"You shall presently. I think I'll ring and ask Rose Perrott to come here; she would take Hannah round and explain things to her. By the way, what an extraordinary name to give a child."

"What do you mean?" said Margaret, in some surprise.

"Hannah! I never heard of a lady being called Hannah; it is like the name of a cook or a servant of some sort."

"Would you like to know what my real name is?" said Hannah, going straight up to the mistress, her cheeks on fire and her eyes blazing.

"I think you are inclined to be an impertinent little miss, but I'll hear what you have got to say."

"I am called 'bad little Hannah,' and I make great mischief at home, and nobody likes me. Perhaps I'll be bad little Hannah at school."

"And break my heart, Hannah," said Margaret North.

Hannah looked hard at her governess; her lips quivered, she hitched up her shoulders, and turned her face aside. A moment or two later Rose Perrott, one of Hannah's classmates, entered the room.

Rose was a tall girl for her age, nearly a head taller than Hannah; she had dark eyes and a pretty face; she was dressed neatly in a white washing frock, and wore a pink pinafore which contained several pockets. Out of these pockets all kinds of extraordinary things peeped. There was a doll's head which was almost hairless, a couple of ninepins, a pair of scissors, and a large three-

cornered paper parcel full of sweetmeats. Hannah looked first at Rose, and then at the contents of her pockets.

"Oh, what a funny girl you are," said Hannah—she ran up to Rose as she spoke. "What queer, 'licious pockets," she continued.

"Hannah, stay quiet for a moment while I introduce you to your companion. Rose, this is the new little girl I told you all about this morning; I hope she will be a good child and do credit to the school. She occupies the fourth bed in your dormitory. Now take her away with you, introduce her to your companions, see that she does not get into mischief, and bring her back to me at seven o'clock this evening. She has no lessons, of course, the first day. Good-by, Hannah; I shall see you at seven."

"But what about Margaret?" said Hannah.

"I will see you, darling, once again before I go."

Hannah left the room, accompanied by Rose.

"What funny pockets you have," said Hannah, the moment they got outside.

"Yes, aren't they?" said Rose, in an eager voice, "I am glad you like them. I asked mother to have them put in on purpose. Pockets are awfully convenient, you'll find, at school."

"Are they? I do wish Margaret would give me an apron like yours; I have nothing but pinafores."

"Pinafores are so babyish," said Rose, raising her voice to a high staccato; "but never mind my apron now; I'll give you the pattern and help you to make one, if you like."

"Will you, really? Oh, I am glad. I like your name too, Rose."

"Well, it is better than yours, isn't it?" laughed Rose Perrott. "Fancy anyone being called Hannah."

"You had better not be rude about it," said Hannah. "I has got it, and it is my name, and I like it very well. It is a strong sort of name; I don't think much of your name; it is pretty, but it isn't strong."

"Oh, I never!" said Rose; "you aren't going to abuse me when you haven't been five minutes in the place! Well, you are a cheeky 'un!"

"What's cheeky?" asked Hannah.

"What you are; now you know."

"Please, Rose," said Hannah, tucking her hand in the most confiding way inside her little companion's arm, "tell me about the other girls I is to sleep in the same room with."

"You'll have to talk better English than that," said Rose. "Fancy a great big girl like you saying 'I is.'"

"What ought I to say?" asked Hannah.

"I am,' of course. What shocking grammar!"

"I like shocking grammar," said Hannah. "I never like the sort of things other people like. I like bad things: bad grammar, bad girls, bad——"

"Oh, hear her!" said Rose, uttering a loud laugh. "Mary, come here; Agnes, where are you? Agnes, we have got an oddity now in the school; but she is rare fun, I can tell you. Oh, I wonder where Sophy Colchester is! Run and fetch her, Mary; we are going to have a lark. So you like bad things, you little imp!"

A great many of the other girls now came running up, and they surrounded Hannah in a sort of circle. Hannah's face, always red, was now crimson; there were drops of moisture on her forehead. She stood in her usual favorite attitude—her stout legs slightly apart, her firm, strong arms hanging down at her sides, her light hair straight up on her forehead, her hat reposing at the back of her neck.

There was nothing for it but to brave it out. Her heart was full to bursting, but she might stand matters if she braved it out; otherwise she must come to an ignominious breakdown.

"I like bad things," she repeated. "Is that such fun to you all? I'll say it over again. I like bad grammar, and I like bad girls, and I like bad Hannahs. I am bad Hannah; that's what I am called at home. Now you all know. I don't care nothing for you!"

"What a remarkable little thing!" said Sophy.

Mary, however, looked hard at the newcomer.

"I expect she'll be something of a Turk," she said.

Agnes Parr shrugged her shoulders and refused to make a remark; but Rose Perrott was interested, and, going up to the child, took her hand.

"You had best come along," she said, "the others will hear you and they will begin to laugh, and then you won't like it."

"I don't care nothing for them," replied Hannah.

She had never felt worse in the whole course of her life.

"Well, come and see my garden," said Rose, "I was told

to take care of you and to see you did not get into mischief; you must come. Why, what is the matter?"

"I don't want to go with you," answered Hannah. "I don't like you; you tease me and all the others tease me, and I don't like none of you, and I never will, what's more—no, I never, never will. I thought bad little Hannah was dead, but she's alive again and hopping. I—I hate you all."

Hannah hitched up her fat shoulders, pursed her rosy lips together, flashed a defiant glance at the excited and wondering children, and the next moment had darted out of sight. She did not in the least care where she was going. At that moment all she wanted was to find herself alone; she wanted to be quite alone; she did not even wish for Margaret North's company. She ran wildly, uttering short screams as she did so; the other girls looked after her in dismay.

"Well, what a little Turk!" repeated Mary Cholmondeley, "and she is to sleep in our room; didn't you say so, Rose?"

"Yes; but I think we had best leave her alone for a few minutes; I'd follow her if I could, but she runs so fast I really couldn't catch up to her. She will have a rare time at school. Mrs. Marshal will soon knock the spirit out of her."

"I wish her joy of her life," said Agnes Parr, shrugging her shoulders again; "but there, girls, need we waste all our afternoon talking about her any more? She is a very ugly, commonplace-looking little thing, and I am sorry for my part that she is to be in the same room with us."

"Oh, we'll soon get her into order!" said Rose. "I was inclined to be good-natured to her, until she took that high and lofty tone; but, of course, such a thing is quite intolerable, and not to be permitted for a single moment in the school. Yes, girls, I am quite ready to go back to our play."

The schoolgirls, who had been standing for a few minutes together, now dispersed to their different occupations and pleasures, for the day of Hannah's arrival was a half holiday.

Meantime, the unhappy and lonely child had wandered far away. She had rushed through one field and then another. At last, seeing a gap in a hedge, she forced her way through; now she was beyond the school boundaries. Little she cared for the school; little at that supreme moment did she care where she was.

"If only I might die," thought the child. "I hate all these girls, I hate Mrs. Marshal; and I was so happy, so very happy with Margaret North. Why am I taken away from Margaret? I'd be a good girl if I was left alone with Margaret. Oh, I can't stand it. I won't; I'll scream, I'll scream, I'll scream!"

Hannah was quite away from everybody, and the passionate desire to try her lungs as of old to the utmost, and so give vent to the overwhelming passion which consumed her, became too great to be resisted. She raised her voice, and yell after yell of childish impotence rose upon the clear heavens. Hannah screamed until no more angry utterances would come from her little throat; then she flung herself flat down on the ground, and sobbed, and

sobbed, and sobbed. The child was tired out, and she slept. Her last waking thought before slumber visited her was a very firm resolve to run away, and not to go back to school any more.

Meanwhile, Margaret was having a long and earnest conversation with Mrs. Marshal. All of a sudden it came into Margaret's heart that she would take Mrs. Marshal absolutely into her confidence. She described Hannah's character, gave her a brief little account of that terrible evening when she had sat on the steps outside the turret room, of Hannah's repentance, and terror, and consequent illness.

"I do not deny that she is a queer child," said the governess, "but she is also a very fine child. She has been mismanaged. I do not wish to say a word against Mrs. Cardigan; she has her own ideas with regard to the bringing up of youth; but those ideas, successful enough doubtless with regard to her two elder girls, have not been at all productive of good results in Hannah's case. Hannah needs different treatment. I have had the sole management of her for over two months, and I know what I am saying. I am very sorry, very sorry indeed, to give her up."

Mrs. Marshal had begun by feeling rather contemptuous of anyone so young-looking as Margaret North, but before the governess had finished speaking she began to see sense in her words.

"I have had a good deal to do with youth," she said, "and in most cases my pupils turned out well. I do not care for the modern idea of excessive indulgence; I be-

lieve that all children require discipline. This school is carried on on very strict lines. We require absolute obedience; we do not give a great deal of liberty. Lessons have to be learned properly, or punishments varying in severity are the result. Some people might blame me for what they consider my old-fashioned notions, but I cannot change them. I have been a school-mistress now for twenty years, and as long as I hold the school of Cumnor West, it will be carried on on the lines which my mother before me and I now in my turn fully advocate. In my opinion, Miss North, if what you say about little Hannah Cardigan is correct, Cumnor West is not the best school for her."

"Could you not say so to Mrs. Cardigan when she returns?" asked Margaret eagerly.

"I cannot do so for a double reason. First, because she would not believe me, her ideas being extremely firm on this point; second, because I should be fighting against my own interests. How many girls do you suppose I would have if I were to make frank remarks of that sort to their parents? I am obliged to you for telling me what you have done; it will help me in the management of the child; but, of course, she must learn to submit; it may be more difficult to break her in than the others, but broken in in the end she must be."

"If, indeed, you will only believe me, and if you will try to win Hannah's heart, you will have no difficulty with her," said Margaret.

"I will remember what you have said, Miss North; and now, if you have finished your tea, we will go and find the

child, in order that you may say good-by to her. I cannot expect her to settle down to school while you are here."

Margaret uttered a sigh.

"I shall part with her with regret," she said, "but I suppose it is best. As you say, Hannah will not settle down to her school life while she knows that I am on the premises."

"I have ordered the fly to take you back to the station in time to catch the five o'clock train," said Mrs. Marshal; "you have just nice time now to say good-by to Hannah. It is ten minutes past four."

The two ladies left Mrs. Marshal's private sitting room, and went out into the grounds. The afternoon happened to be a beautiful one, and all the girls who belonged to Cumnor West were playing or sitting about under the trees and on the lawns. Swings were fastened up here and there in the trees, and some of the girls were lying in them, reading story-books and otherwise amusing themselves.

Mrs. Marshal, who knew all the girls well, went straight in the direction where four little maidens were seated in a circle on the grass, busily engaged chattering together. No four children could look more innocent and happy than Rose Perrott, Sophy Clochester, Mary Cholmondeley, and Agnes Parr. To look at them you would almost suppose that butter would not melt in their mouths. They each wore pinafores to keep their neat washing dresses clean; their sailor hats were placed correctly, and not at all in a rakish manner, on their heads. When they saw Mrs. Marshal and Margaret North approaching they

rose to their feet and stood in a dutiful row, waiting for the head-mistress to come up to them.

"Rose, dear, I trust you are enjoying your holiday," said Mrs. Marshal. Then she turned to Margaret: "You see," she said, "the effect of properly enforced discipline. Could there be better or nicer girls than these four?"

She then came a little nearer to the group, and, once more addressing Rose, said:

"I trust you have undertaken the task I set you, my dear Rose, and have shown your little companion round the school. Of course, at first she is strange and will need kindness from you all; but I need not ask my dear Rose, my dear Agnes, my dear Mary and Sophy, to be otherwise than good and kind. By the way, where is little Hannah, Rose? I do not see her in your midst. I doubt not Hannah would enjoy your innocent conversation."

While Mrs. Marshal was speaking, Rose's face became first red and then pale; she shuffled uneasily on one foot and then on the other, and finally, twirling her thumbs, looked down and was silent.

"What is the matter?" asked Mrs. Marshal. "Sophy, have you anything to say; were you introduced to little Hannah Cardigan?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Sophy, "and—Rose, you had better speak."

"I am ever so sorry, Mrs. Marshal," said Rose, "but it really wasn't my fault."

"What wasn't your fault, dear?"

"Hannah got so queer and excited, and we had not said a word to tease her; we all meant to be very kind to her;

but she—she ran away, she is somewhere in the grounds—she said she wished to be alone. We all thought it better to leave her by herself until her passion cooled down.”

“Her passion?” said Mrs. Marshal, in a shocked voice.

“Yes; I am ever so sorry, but she was in a dreadful passion. I never saw anyone in such a state.”

“It was perfectly awful,” said Mary Cholmondeley; “she got so crimson I thought she was going to have a fit.”

“But where is she now?” said Margaret North, speaking for the first time.

“I don’t know; she ran somewhere down there.”

“And you, none of you, followed her?”

“No; we thought it best not.”

“I meant to look for her when tea was ready,” continued Rose. “I thought if she were alone she might cool down.”

Margaret North had already left the group, and was speeding across the fields. Her heart was beating fast with indignation and pain. She crossed one field, then another, and presently seeing the gap in the hedge, went up to it and studied it attentively. She had not the least idea where Hannah had gone, but now she saw a tiny fleck of blue on a briar which guarded one side of this gap. That blue was evidently a part of Hannah’s washing frock. Margaret recognized the pattern. A moment later she was bending over the little sleeper. She had lifted the child into her strong arms, and, sitting down on the grass, she laid her head on her bosom, and kissed Hannah on her hot little lips two or three times. Hannah began to dream and to talk excitedly:

"I'm never going to be good no more; I am never, never, never going to be good no more."

"Wake up, Hannah," said Margaret then. She shook the little girl once or twice, and Hannah opened her blue eyes. She looked full up into Margaret's face, and a feeling of contentment filled hers.

"I had an awful dream, Margaret," she said, "but it is all right now. Where are we, Margaret? Is this day four or day five? I forget the days; I'm sort of confused, Margaret. Where are we? is it day four or day five, or is it dreadful, *dreadful* day six? It hasn't come yet, has it, Margaret?"

"Yes, dearest, it has come, and—and gone. This is day seven, and you are at school, Hannah. Hannah, you are in the thick of the battle; don't be a little coward, be a brave soldier."

"Oh, Margaret, Margaret! I remember now, and I cannot, I cannot. They laughed at me and I got mad; they teased me. Oh, Margaret, I must go back with you; I must, I must!"

"You cannot, Hannah; you must be a brave soldier. Think of all you promised me. There—lay your head on my breast for a moment; I am going to pray to God. I am going to ask Him to help you."

Margaret said no prayer aloud, but she did whisper something, something strong, something brave, which was wafted up on wings to heaven, and must have reached the throne of the Father, for little Hannah grew quiet, the struggle, the passion seemed to leave her; she raised her face, quite pale for her, and kissed Margaret.

"You will be good, for my sake and for God's?" said Margaret.

"Yes, yes, Margaret; but, oh, Margaret, I *can't* keep it up! I'll just try for a little for your sake, Margaret."

"And for God's, Hannah."

"And for God," said Hannah.

"Remember that He will be with you, even though I have to go away. He will be with you to-night, and to-morrow, and every day and every night until we meet again, so you need not be lonely, darling."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE POSTAL ORDER.

After all Margaret did not leave by the five o'clock train. She stopped on until eight o'clock, and she did this by Mrs. Marshal's special request. Thus she and Hannah spent their evening together, and Margaret also managed to have a long conversation with Rose Perrott and Mary Cholmondeley. She liked Mary's face, and she contrived with infinite tact to interest her in Hannah.

"You can do much for her, if you will," she said, "and, oh, how grateful I shall be to you. All Hannah's future life depends on how her school companions treat her now. I know she is a queer child; I know she is subject to great fits of passion, but she is also a splendid child, and she will love you, Mary. Be true to her; you will try, will you not?"

So Mary promised, and Rose also promised. They were really attracted by Margaret, and told her quite frankly that they wished she would become one of the teachers at the school.

"I would gladly do so if I could for Hannah's sake," replied Margaret, "but I have other duties to perform, and fear it would be impossible."

When Margaret went away Hannah was sound asleep,

and was not subjected, therefore, to the real pain of the parting. It was on the next morning that her school-life was really to begin.

Mary's bed was next to Hannah's, and she took care that the little girl need not be disturbed a moment before it was absolutely necessary. At last, however, there was barely time for Hannah to get dressed in order to be in the schoolroom by 6.30. Accordingly Mary bent over her and shook her very gently on her fat shoulders. Hannah opened her blue eyes with a start.

"Who is you?" she asked.

"I am Mary Cholmondeley; I am one of your room-mates. You are at school, you know, and I—I promised that dear Miss North to be kind to you."

Hannah did not speak, but her face became suffused with the deepest crimson. Her eyes looked dim for a moment, as though she could cry if she would; but then she sat up in bed, pushed back her short hair, and said submissively:

"Am I to get up?"

"Yes, the bathroom is just along this passage; I will take you to it. You would like a nice cold bath, would you not?"

Hannah did not say anything; she felt that her only chance of keeping good was to be absolutely silent. Mary accompanied her to the bathroom and was about to close the door, but Hannah stretched out her hand and pulled her in.

"Stay with me," she said.

"Do you really want me to?" asked Mary, delighted in spite of herself.

"Yes, 'cos if you don't, I'm sure to scream."

"Oh, you ought not, really, Hannah."

"Don't say that, only stay with me; I promised Margaret, and I'm going to stick to it; I'll stick to it to-day, anyhow."

"You'll be good all day; that's lovely," said Mary. "See here, Hannah; if you're very quick I can stay with you while you are washing."

"I never washed myself in all my life," said Hannah. "I don't know how."

"Oh, I'll show you, or I'll wash you, if you like this morning. Take off your nightdress and step in."

The bath had three little steps down to it. It was fairly deep; when Hannah stood in it the water came up nearly to her waist. She was a very plucky child, and now, to Mary's great astonishment, she began to laugh.

"Why, this is real splendid," she said. "May I splash?"

"Certainly."

"I'll splash you if you don't dodge, Mary."

Mary thought it well to edge towards the door. Hannah began to make a great noise in the bath. As she moved rapidly, waves came which excited her beyond measure.

"You have been in quite long enough," said Mary. "Jump out now."

"No, I won't. I'm going to stay in a good deal longer. I like it very much indeed. I'll splash you, so you had

better duck your head. Oh, won't it be fun! I'll throw all this water over you."

"Hannah, you must get out; you promised to be good to-day."

"Is it wicked to stay in the bath?"

"Certainly it is, for we shall be late, and then you'll have a bad mark; and you don't know what Mrs. Marshal is when—when you offend her."

"You mean when I rub her the wrong way?" asked Hannah.

"It means the same; but what do you know about it?"

"I know all about it. I am going to be good, so I'll get out."

Hannah scrambled out of the bath, and stood like a wet cherub on the floor. Mary gave her a towel and helped her to dry herself. They then went into the dormitory, and the rest of Hannah's toilet was quickly made.

"Now you are ready to come downstairs, I suppose?" said Mary.

"No, I am not; I have to do something first."

"What is that?"

"Pray."

"Oh, say your prayers," said Mary.

"Pray!" repeated Hannah. She did not look again at her companion, but dropped on her knees in the middle of the floor, covering her little red face with her fat hands. She remained in that attitude, swaying gently backwards and forwards, for about a minute and a half; then she jumped up quite cheerfully, and held out her hand to Mary.

"I like you very much indeed, Mary," she said. "You'll be good to me to-day, won't you?"

"Of course I will, Hannah."

"Then I won't scream. If you see me getting awfully red will you come to me, or look at me, or nod to me, or something; then I'll know that you are understanding, and I'll be able to get on."

"What happens when you get very red, Hannah? By the way, you are that always, are you not?"

"I'm pink when I'm good," said Hannah. "When I'm bad I'm red, when I'm very bad I'm crimson."

"What a very funny child!"

"Yes, aren't I? Everyone says so. I 'spect I'm too queer to keep good long, but I promised Margaret; I'll keep my word whatever happens to-day."

The two little girls entered the great schoolroom just in time. Hannah had of course not yet been placed in any class, but when Mary entered her own, Hannah placed herself stubbornly by her side.

"You ought not to sit here, Hannah," said Rose Perrott, "for you have not been placed yet."

"I mean to sit here; mind your own business," said Hannah.

Rose stepped back, a look of mingled anger and amusement convulsing her face.

"Don't notice her, please, Rose," whispered Mary in desperation, "she has promised me to be good, and I think she will try. Of course she is an extraordinary little thing, but there is something awfully winning about her."

"Oh, I see you're going to take her part; well, I am

sure I don't care," said Rose. "I think she's a tiresome child, and that there is a great deal too much fuss made about her."

"No whispering, no whispering, little girls!" remarked one of the governesses, who walked up the center of the room at that moment.

Soon prayers began, and were quickly over, and then lessons were the order of the hour. Hannah was not accustomed to working before breakfast, and when she was set a sum to do, she looked full up at her teacher's face, and said:

"I am too empty to do any work; I want my breakfast."

"Too empty, little girl—that is a very vulgar speech; don't let me hear it again."

"But it is true," said Hannah.

"True or not, it is a vulgar thing to say, and you are not to repeat it again."

"Then aren't I to tell you if I'm hungry?"

"Certainly not; I have nothing whatever to do with your meals. Breakfast will be at eight o'clock, and I am glad to hear you have a good appetite. You will enjoy your breakfast when it comes."

Hannah said no more, but Mary, who watched her from afar, for she had been moved to another part of the school-room, noticed that her pink face had become red. Hannah stared full at her, and when Mary nodded two or three times and put on a cheerful expression, the red gradually subsided to its normal tone of very healthy pink.

The sum was done wrong, of course, for Hannah did

not understand the rules; but the rest of the time during morning school passed without any adventure.

When the girls went in to breakfast Hannah saw, to her great delight and astonishment, a letter lying on her plate. As she noticed that the other girls were allowed to read their letters, she tore hers open; it was from her mother, and was written in a large, round hand, almost like print. Hannah could manage to read it; it only contained a few words.

"My Dear Hannah: As this is your first morning at school I thought I would write to you. I trust you will try to be a good girl and redeem your character. I send you a postal order for a sovereign, as you will want a little pocket-money.

"Your Affectionate Mother."

Hannah did not know what a postal order for a sovereign meant. She knew what a sovereign itself meant very well, indeed; but what in the world was a postal order? She held the little thin piece of blue paper with its blue writing between her finger and thumb. The girl who sat next to her watched her anxiously. This girl was wiser than Hannah, and knew very well what this piece of paper indicated.

As soon as breakfast was over all the children went into the grounds for a quarter of an hour's play before returning to the schoolroom. Mary Cholmondeley went straight up to Hannah. She was followed by Rose Perrott, by a little girl called Clarice Jones, and by Agnes Parr.

"Well, Hannah, how are you getting on?" said Mary Cholmondeley.

"All right," answered Hannah. She spoke in an abrupt, short voice.

Rose tittered.

"You were in great luck to get a letter this morning," she said, after a pause.

"It was from my mother. Why shouldn't she write to me?" answered Hannah. "She said she hoped I'd be good and redeem something. I don't know what she meant. 'Spect I am good. 'Spect I'm the goodest girl here to-day.

Rose laughed again.

"Whatever you are, you're a little oddity," she said.

"Well," cried Mary Cholmondeley, "she's a very nice little oddity, and I'm sure we'll get on splendidly with her. I am glad your mother wrote to you, Hannah; you'll write to her back again?"

"No, I won't," answered Hannah.

"You won't, answer your own mother's letter?"

"No."

"Why?"

"'Cos I don't like her."

This remark caused a sensation in the group which surrounded Hannah.

"You must be a queer girl," said Clarice Jones, "not to like your mother—your own, own, only mother."

"I'm sure I'm glad I haven't two of 'em," said Hannah, "one's quite enough."

"You are a queer little thing!"

"Look here," said Hannah, not taking the least notice of the last remark, "what's this paper? Mother says she sends me a postal order for a sovereign."

"Oh, I say, lucky you!" cried Agnes.

"You are in luck," exclaimed Rose, "a whole sovereign—twenty shillings!"

"It isn't," said Hannah, "it is nothing but a stupid bit of paper. It is just like mother; I said I didn't like her; she has given me this instead of a proper sovereign."

"But you can get a sovereign by means of it, you little silly!"

"I aren't silly," said Hannah, "I'm as wise as you are, there!"

"Hannah, Hannah!" said Mary.

"I'm not going to scream, Mary; I'm going to keep it up; I'm going to be the goodest girl in the school to-day. But Rose musn't talk what she knows nothing about. This is a stupid bit of paper, and it can't turn into a sovereign."

"But I tell you it can," said Rose. "Do listen, Hannah. If you take it to the post-office you will get twenty shillings for it, and twenty shillings is the same as a sovereign."

"No, it isn't; a sovereign is gold."

"Oh, you are a little——"

"Never mind," said Mary; "don't vex her. I'll explain it to you, Hannah; just come and have a walk with me."

As Mary spoke she held out her hand. Hannah clutched it, and they walked down a side alley.

"You must be quick and ask me what you want to

know," said Mary, "for the school gong will sound in a minute, and then we must all go in, whatever happens. You would like to have a sovereign of your own, would you not?"

"Course I would. But mother has only sent me a postal order. It is just like her, that's all I can say."

"I tell you what, Hannah; we'll ask Mrs. Marshal to change it for you."

"How do you mean?"

"She will give you a sovereign if you give her that bit of paper, and if she won't, why we'll take it to the post-office and do it ourselves."

"I 'spect we'll take it to the post-office and do it ourselves," said Hannah, looking very wise and very determined. "I'm not going to give it to no Mrs. Marshal. Mother likes Mrs. Marshal, and that's quite enough for me."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that she can't be at all a nice sort of a woman. The people mother likes are not never nice."

"Hannah, you ought not to talk like that of your mother."

"Don't you try to correct me, Mary Cholmondeley, 'cos I won't stand it. Do you see my face; is it getting very red?"

"It is rather; the cheeks are, and presently it will mount to the forehead."

"And it will go to the tip of the nose and down to the chin," continued Hannah. "I know it, and it makes me

so hot, and then my heart seems to bubble up, and I——” She clapped her hands with violence to her mouth.

“There’s the school gong; you have no time for your face to get red now,” said Mary. “Come in at once; Mrs. Marshal will be so cross if we are not punctual.”

“Just like mother,” said Hannah, in a low voice. She followed the others into school.

The rest of the morning passed somehow. Hannah had very few lessons to learn. She was put through a short examination, during which her intense ignorance was plainly demonstrated for the benefit of her companions. Hannah could read and write—her reading was somewhat uncertain, her writing was waggly; of other accomplishments, with the exception of a slight knowledge of arithmetic, she had none. She had never learned French, she had not yet begun music. Her mind, as Mrs. Marshal expressed it, was a white slate, a blank with nothing written on it.

“It is nothing of the sort,” said Hannah, when this amiable description was repeated aloud for her benefit. “There’s all sorts of things scribbled on my mind; all over it—everywhere. There’s a lot of bad on it. You don’t call it white when there’s a lot of bad on it.”

“I’ll tell you what you have got, Hannah,” said Mrs. Marshal, laying her hand on the child’s shoulder, “a very quick little tongue, which would be very much better employed if it were kept quiet.”

“It can’t; it is always waggling,” said Hannah.

“Well, it must learn to cease to waggle.”

Hannah pressed her hand suddenly to her mouth.

"What are you doing that for, my dear child? It is an extraordinary habit."

"Cos I don't want to scream."

"To scream? How terrible! What would make you scream?"

"You, ma'am," said Hannah, looking her teacher full in the face.

Mrs. Marshal turned red herself; after a pause she said gravely:

"Go back to your desk now, Hannah; you will be set some easy lessons, which I hope you will try to learn."

"I'll do my best for to-day, 'cos I promised," answered Hannah. She turned her back on her governess, and walked down the room.

Two or three girls looked at her, as though they were inclined to titter, but Mary nodded kindly and encouragingly, and Hannah refrained from making any noise.

After school Rose Perrott and Agnes Parr came up to her side.

"If you really want that sovereign, Agnes can get it for you," said Rose, in an eager voice.

"I don't want it to-day," said Hannah, "it don't matter; don't you go interfering."

"Oh, I thought you did; of course it is of no consequence," said Rose.

She turned away with a sigh. Presently she went up to Mary.

"Mary, you know you'll have to do it."

"Do what?"

"Why, you'll have to speak to that child. She fancies she can spend that sovereign when she gets it."

"Well, do let her alone," said Mary. "Poor little mite, why may not she have it?"

"But she must do what the rest of us do. It is the rule of the school, and why should she be let off?"

"Well, I think it is a very hard rule," said Mary, "and I wish you wouldn't press it in the case of Hannah."

"I must," said Rose; "I have no choice in the matter. She belongs to the younger part of the school, and she will have to spend her sovereign in giving us our treat. She must do it."

"I'll see if I can manage it," said Mary. "A sovereign is an awful lot of money. What shall we do with it? Have a picnic?"

"No, no; we don't want Mrs. Marshal to know. Speak to Hannah first, and then come back to me, and we'll arrange it as quickly as we can."

CHAPTER XV.

MARY'S COUNSEL.

Finding that no one was taking any notice of her, Hannah stole away by herself. She thought of returning to the field where she had fallen asleep yesterday. She hoped that she would be quite alone there; she wanted to be alone, for she had a good deal to think of. During all her short life she had never been accustomed to the society of other children. Being several years the youngest in the family, she had been left alone a great deal. Celia and Olivia had never played with her in the real sense of the word—they had condescended to her now and then, and had quarreled with her a great deal. As to Kenneth, she regarded him as a grown man. It was impossible to think of nurse as an ordinary playmate, although she was a very nice person to hug at times and kiss at times, and pommel at other times. Margaret North, it is true, represented a sort of angel to Hannah, but neither could she quite think of Margaret as a playmate. Now all of a sudden, without the least warning, she was surrounded by them. There was Mary Cholmondeley, who was nice enough; there was Rose Perrott, who was not nice at all; there was Agnes Parr, whom Hannah quickly set down as greedy and selfish; and there were scores and scores

of other children. Many of them were about Hannah's age, and many again were older. Hannah was puzzled and wearied. She liked Mary very well, but she could not bear the others. She thought it would be soothing and pleasant to sit away by herself.

"Almost as if I were in Lie Down Corner," she thought. She looked behind her; there was no one in sight. It would be a couple of hours before there were any more lessons; the sun was shining overhead, a little gentle breeze was blowing; it was a perfect day in autumn, the air was sweet and laden with perfume. Hannah, shaking her fat shoulders, pushed her hat further back on her head than ever, and trotted in a sort of sea-saw movement down the lawn, and over a stile through the first field. When, however, she reached the gap through which she had squeezed herself yesterday she found that it had been closed by a big briar which had been placed against it. This had been firmly planted in the ground, and Hannah could only have removed it by intense toil and by scratching herself violently.

"After all," she said to herself, "it doesn't really matter; I can stay in this field; no one will notice me; I want to be quite alone. Those girls are awfully tiring; I don't want such a lot of playmates all of a sudden."

So Hannah seated herself under the hedge, and presently took out her mother's letter from her pocket, and proceeded to read it once again. It was a short letter, and Hannah did not see much in it. She wondered what her mother meant by the word "redeem."

"Whatever it is I don't intend to do it," said Hannah

to herself. "I am never going to mind mother; I don't like her, and I won't obey or be nice to people what I don't like."

Having read the letter she proceeded to unfold the postal order, to place it flat in her lap, and to read the words written on it. "Twenty Shillings" in good large writing were printed across the top. Hannah held the order to the light; she looked at it up and down.

"They can't make a sovereign out of it," she said; "what nonsense mother did talk. I 'spect mother is a very silly woman. They can't make no sovereign out of this. I have a good mind to tear it up; it is all nonsense from first to last."

But before Hannah quite carried this rash resolution into effect eager steps were heard approaching, and a small clear voice called "Hannah! Hannah! Hannah!" and the next moment, almost as red in the face as Hannah herself, Mary Cholmondeley threw herself on the ground by the little girl's side.

"Oh! what a race you have given me, Hannah!" she said, when she had found her voice.

"I don't know what you mean," said Hannah.

"Why, I ran after you. Why did you go so far away?"

"'Cos I wanted to be by my lone self," said Hannah.

"I don't want you, Mary; I wish you would go back to the house; I would much rather be alone."

"Oh, Hannah, I did think you liked me!"

"So I do, and I'll go on liking you if you don't bother me; if you do I'll turn to hating you. I can turn to hate people all in a minute; I can hate them awfully in a

quarter of an hour; I can hate them so badly that I never would love them again, whatever happens, in half an hour. You had much better go, Mary; you had, really."

"Oh, Hannah, you are the queerest little thing in the world. I would leave you, for I dare say you would like to be alone, but I have something most important to say."

"Well, say it and go," said Hannah.

"But I cannot say it all in a minute. It will take some little time; it is about your postal order."

"If you say another word about this postal order I'll tear it into ribbons," said Hannah.

"Oh, you won't, Hannah! Why, don't you understand? Now, do let me explain."

Hannah pursed up her lips and looked straight across the field; she pretended not to listen. If she could she would have closed her ears. Mary went on speaking.

"That postal order is a letter to the post-office, telling them to give you a sovereign. Now, don't you understand?"

Hannah did, and her eyes began to brighten. She would not let Mary see, however, that she was gratified, and hitching her shoulders a little higher, she deliberately turned her back on her new friend.

"Hannah, do you know you're rude?"

"Course I are; I mean to be," said Hannah.

"But how am I to like you if you are rude?"

"Do you like me, Mary?" said Hannah, to whom this was an altogether new view of the position.

"Of course I do."

"Are you sure? You are not telling a lie, are you?"

said Hannah. "Mary, if you tell a lie you may be struck down dead, like the people in the Bible."

"But I don't tell lies," said Mary, "so I won't be struck dead."

"Well, that's all right; then you do like me?"

"Yes; I could love you very soon. Why, Hannah, I could love you as quickly as you could hate me."

"Oh, love me!" said Hannah.

"Yes, let me kiss you, Hannah."

Hannah cuddled up quite suddenly to Mary.

"I do like you to love me," she said then; "it is sort of warming to be loved. Margaret North loves me."

"Of course she does; I don't wonder."

"Why do you say that? Nobody else loves me 'cept Sugar-plum?"

"Who is Sugar-plum, Hannah?"

"My old nurse; don't ask me any more about her; she is a silly old thing, but she loves me."

"Well, now, there are three people who love you," said Mary, "Sugar-plum—what a queer name!—Miss North, the nicest lady I ever saw in my life, and—and I. Oh, I'm not much, but still I do love you."

"You are an *awfully* nice girl," said Hannah; "may I clutch you inside your arm?"

"Of course you may."

"And may I scrooge you up for a bit?"

"I don't quite know what that is."

"Oh, hug, I mean, squeeze you as tight as ever I can, take the breath out of you; that's what I does with Roly-poly and Fuzzy-wuz."

"Who in the world are they?"

"My poodle pup and my Persian kitten."

"You must tell me about them presently, Hannah; but now let us talk of something else. This postal order."

"Let me get a little closer to you, Mary."

"Oh, Hannah, you are a nice girl."

"Let me put my arm round your waist, Mary."

"To be sure you may, Hannah."

"Suppose we get our two heads so that they touch. That would show that we was awfully loving, wouldn't it?"

"It certainly would," said Mary, "but would it not be a little hot?"

"What do that matter?" said Hannah. "I don't believe you do love me; I believe you're the sort of person that tells lies."

"I don't, I don't; Hannah, you are the queerest child in all the world."

"Then you don't love me if you call me a queer child; you hate me. Mary, you has told an awful lie. Is you beginning to feel cold, is your breath going to stop, do you feel all choky as if you were going to die?"

"No, I don't, for I have not told a lie. I love you *because* you are queer, I think."

"Oh, well, that's all right," said Hannah, resuming her position once more by Mary's side. "Now, let us put our heads close together and our arms round each other waistses, and let us talk."

"It must be about the postal order, Hannah."

"Bother the postal order! What do you want to say?"

"We must take it to the post-office and get the sovereign."

"All right—let's," said Hannah.

"But there is no time now. On Saturday there will be a half-holiday, and perhaps one of the governesses will go with us. Miss Graham is rather kind, and perhaps she will if we coax her very hard."

"Where is the post-office?" asked Hannah.

"Oh, it is two miles away at Cumnor West. You can walk two miles, can't you?"

"I can walk twenty miles," said Hannah, who thought it well to exaggerate in order to make a good effect.

"You must be strong."

"Course I am; I'm the strongest girl that ever was; I could knock you down as if you was a ninepin."

"Don't try, please, Hannah."

"Course I won't 'cos I love you; but I'll knock down any of the others if they make themselves disagreeable. You had best tell them, Mary; you had best let them know that I am a roaring lion and an awful sort of a wolf. I can bite, I can scratch, there's nothing I can't do to those I don't like, and I don't like anyone in the school 'cept you, Mary, so now you had better tell 'em."

"This won't last long," said Mary; "you love me, and you'll soon love the others, because you can't help it if they love you."

"Oh, but they don't!" said Hannah.

"Well, I expect they'll soon begin to," said Mary. "I think you're awful fun, and I like you just because you are such an oddity."

"Dear, dear," said Hannah, "most people hate me because I am an oddity. Well, what are we to do?"

"We are to get the postal order changed."

"All right; I don't mind."

"What will you do with the sovereign when you have it?" asked Mary.

"I don't know—keep it in a box. Oh, yes! I know what I'll do; I'll buy a present for Margaret North. She is coming to see me at the half-term."

"But, Hannah dear, I hope you won't be awfully hurt, but it is the rule of the school here that the first money any girl gets she spends for the benefit of the school."

"Now, I don't know what you are talking about," said Hannah.

"Oh, it is so difficult to explain! You see the school is divided into two divisions. There is the senior school and the junior school. Of course, you and I, we both belong to the junior school, and one school has nothing whatever to do with the other. There are different teachers, and different school-rooms, and different everything. There are about fifty girls in the junior school, and about seventy girls in the senior school. But one of the rules is, and it has been the rule of this school for nearly a hundred years—for it really is an awfully old school, Hannah!"

"It must be; it is a Methuselah sort of school," said Hannah.

"Yes, yes, Hannah, you are funny."

Hannah's eyes sparkled.

"Sit a little closer to me, Mary," she said.

"Well," continued Mary, wincing slightly, for Hannah was squeezing her arm quite painfully, "it is the rule of the school that the first money each new girl gets is spent in giving a treat to the others."

"What sort of a treat?"

"Well, as you have got such a lot, a whole sovereign, we thought it might be a great big feast. What do you say?"

"I don't care a bit," said Hannah; "it would be rather fun. Who is to buy the things?"

"Well, you, of course, must choose them, as you have got the money."

Hannah's eyes now sparkled brighter than ever. She sprang to her feet, and began to dance excitedly up and down in front of Mary.

"I am glad," she said. "I'll give the most lovely feast to all the other girls. I'll choose the things. Yes, yes, I am glad, I am glad."

"Hannah, you are generous. Come back at once, and let us tell them; why, they will all love you now. You don't know what a lot of good that sovereign will do. We'll make up a committee this very afternoon, and we'll appoint the day when the feast is to be held. We will have it in one of the attics. The fun of it is, Hannah, that none of the mistresses are to know; they must not know on any account; it would be no fun after that."

"And what time are we to have it?"

"We generally have our attic feasts in the middle of the night."

Hannah looked more and more excited.

"Mary, Mary," she said, "it was awfully queer of you not to tell me the very moment I got the sovereign. Course I'm delighted; I never thought I'd like anything so well in the whole course of my life. Mary, I 'spect I'll love school. Oh, I'll choose all the things we are to eat, and we'll have them in the middle of the night. We'll get awfully sick afterwards, won't we, Mary?"

"I don't know," said Mary; "I hope not."

"Oh, yes, we will; it wouldn't be fun if we wasn't all sick afterwards, and had to have the doctor and black draughts, and all the other things; but come, come; let's fly back to the others. Oh, I do like school; I 'spect I'll be awfully happy here, and I'm never going to be naughty any more. Come along, Mary; I love you, and I'm going to love the others, if they like."

CHAPTER XVI.

FIFTY GIRLS.

Hannah and Mary scampered back across the fields. Hannah's breath came in great pants; she was so terribly excited, and so anxious to get to the others. They found several of the girls of the junior school in the playground at the back of the house. This playground had a border of trees at its further end; the branches hung over the grass, and made nice shade. Just at the edge of the field, also, was a tinkling stream which chattered by with a pretty, noisy murmur. The girls liked to sit at the edge of the stream and look down into the water, and pretend now and then to catch fish. They never did catch any, but, all the same, they never stopped trying. They fished with little bits of stick with string attached, and bait in the shape of tiny worms, but the fish never, never on any single occasion, came to the bait. Now they were all somewhat tired of this well-known sport, and when they saw Hannah and Mary tearing across the field, they turned to look at them, and expected, as they expressed it, to have a bit of fun with the queer little oddity, for this was the name they had already given Hannah. As soon as they drew near, Hannah shouted in a loud voice: "I have come 'bout our treat; collect all

the girls, please, for I want to talk to them 'bout our great treat."

This news was as agreeable as it was unexpected. No one in the school had given the poor oddity any credit for being both generous and affectionate. It seemed now as though Hannah herself had torn a veil from all their eyes. The girls who belonged to her dormitory clustered round her, and several more were not far to seek. Hannah all of a sudden felt new power springing within her; she was no longer the poor little stranger, disliked by the others, fought shy of; on the contrary, she was the great victorious general. She seized her opportunity to establish herself firmly at once in her new and delightful position.

"Is all the junior school here?" she asked, gazing round her with an air of importance.

The girls who had been for a long time at Cumnor West stared; they could not help it; but there was something about Hannah's somewhat martial attitude which aroused their admiration, and when she said again in a clear, trumpet-like voice: "If all the junior school is not here, collect it, please. Be quick about it; don't stand staring, all of you. You look *so* silly. Go and collect all the school and bring them to me, to Hannah Cardigan, without a moment's delay."

They gave a little cheer.

Mary started off to obey the orders of her general, but Hannah clutched her by the arm.

"No, you stay by me, Mary," she said; "you and me is loving each other, you know, and we'll stick one to the other for better, for worse. I heard that said once when

people was getting married, and you and me is the same as if we were married; isn't we, Mary? So we'll stick to one another for better, for worse."

"Yes, that we will," answered Mary; and then she added softly: "Till death us do part."

"See you tell no lies, then," said Hannah, glancing earnestly at her, "or you'll be struck down dead any minute. Now then, girls, is none of you going to collect the junior school? I want to talk to them."

Several started off on this quest, and soon the girls came flocking into the field in little batches, some of them contemptuous, some amused, but all equally curious and interested.

When Hannah had got all her forces round her she began to count them.

"Is there fifty of us here?" she said.

"Yes, yes," said Mary Cholmondeley, "every single girl belonging to the junior school is here now, Hannah. Set to work, for we'll have to go back to lessons before long."

"I aren't thinking of going back to lessons," said Hannah, "until I has settled what I want to do. Well, girls, there is fifty of us, and I am the new girl. I'm sort of in the way, aren't I? You don't like me, does you? You think I'm in the way, and that I'm awfully queer, don't you, girls?"

"Oh, you're a jolly little kid," said one girl, who was on the outskirts of the crowd.

"Who said I was a jolly little kid?" cried Hannah; "let her come and stand near me; I want those girls who are going to love me to stand near me."

This girl was pushed forward by her fellows; they were all in peals of laughter; in fact, every time Hannah opened her mouth a good many burst out laughing.

"It is very rude to laugh when a person speaks," said Hannah; "I know that much, 'cos I was taught manners."

"Oh, you are the queerest little thing I ever came across," said a girl of the name of Madge Johnson. "But now do tell us what you want of us all for. Of course we all like you, you queer little thing. Particularly if you're plucky and have no fear."

"Fear? What's that?" said Hannah. She turned and looked defiantly around her; she felt at that moment as if fear could never trouble her again.

"Well, now, let us to business," she said; "I have got a postal order."

"So you have, you duck," said Madge Johnson.

"It is for a sovereign. I didn't know what it meant when it came this morning, but Mary Cholmondeley, who is my dearest of dear friends, has told me all about it. Mary says that it is a letter to the post-office telling them to give me a sovereign—that is a good bit of money, and it holds twenty shillings inside it."

"Yes, yes, that's plain enough," said Rose Perrott; "go on, Hannah, go on."

"Well, by the rules of the school there is to be a feast made out of my sovereign."

"Three cheers for odd little Hannah!" called out Rose Perrott at this juncture.

All the girls took up the sound, and three cheers for odd little Hannah floated out of the field and into the

playground occupied by the senior school. One of the seniors asked another girl what the noise was about, and this girl said:

"It is only those poor chickens, the junior school; they are making love to the little red girl who came yesterday."

"Well, she seems a nice little mite," said the other girl, and then they said no more, although the cheers for odd little Hannah kept sounding and sounding over the hedge.

"Let us arrange it this way," said Hannah. "Fifty girls and twenty shillings—how much money will that mean for each girl?"

She threw out her daring little question, not having the slightest idea of troubling herself to solve it. A group of the biggest girls in the junior school immediately put their heads together, and at last one girl, Jessie Wilson by name, shouted out that twenty shillings divided amongst fifty produced the large sum of fourpence-half-penny apiece.

"That is an awful lot of money," said Hannah; "why, let us see: fourpence-halfpenny, that means nine halfpence, and—and eighteen farthings. Eighteen farthings for each girl—oh, it is a lot of money; we'll make the grandest feast."

"But look here, Hannah," said Rose Perrott. "Just come and let us sit together; we must arrange all this. We don't do it that way. I mean, we don't give the money to each girl."

"What are you talking about?" said Hannah.

"What I say—we buy the things, and then each girl gets her share; that's the way we have always done it."

"But it is not the way I mean to do it," said Hannah. "Mayn't I do it my own way?"

"Oh, certainly, if you have a better way."

"It is my own money, you know," continued Hannah.

"Yes, yes, of course it is your own money," said Mary. "What are you thinking of doing, darling?"

"Scrooge my arm, will you?" said Hannah, "scrooge it as tight as you can, and then I'll tell all the others of the great feast we are to have. Get a chair, and let me stand on it. Will somebody get me a chair; I must be taller than any of you."

A girl flew across the lawn, and presently returned with a garden seat. Hannah mounted upon it, and in that position she really did feel important.

"Well, this is what I want to do," she said; "I am going to get my postal order changed into a gold sovereign, I am going to get my sovereign changed into twenty shillings, I am going to get my twenty shillings changed into fifty threepences, fifty pennies, and fifty halfpennies, and I am going to give every girl in the junior school fourpence halfpenny to spend on a treat. Each girl can buy just what she likes; I'll have fourpence halfpenny, and the rest of you will have fourpence halfpenny—that's nine halfpennies and eighteen farthings—and each of us can buy just what we like, and we'll go into the big attic in the middle of the night to eat what we has got."

"It wouldn't be a good plan at all," said Rose Perrott; "it wouldn't be at all nice; why, what a very queer feast it would be!"

"It is the only thing to be done," said Hannah. "You

can have your fourpence halfpenny each, or you can have nothing at all. Now you can choose. I am Hannah, and I always have my own way, and this is my way of spending my own sovereign."

The girls stared one at the other. Each girl to have fourpence halfpenny to spend on some small matter in the way of food, cakes, or buns, or sweeties; it certainly did not seem a wise plan.

"You don't like it," said Hannah; "I see by your eyes, all of you, that you don't like it. Some of you is frowning and some of you is trying not to laugh, and you're all saying: 'What a fool that little girl is!' but it is the only thing I mean to do, so you can just make the best of it. You can let me know to-morrow whether it is to be 'yes' or 'no.'"

Mary at this moment darted away from Hannah's side, and began to whisper earnestly to Rose Perrott. Rose communicated Mary's whisper to several girls to her right, these girls told it to the rest of the school, and, after a moment, Jessie Wilson and Madge Johnson held up their hands and came a step forward.

"For our parts," they said, "we are sorry that Hannah Cardigan wishes to spend her sovereign in this way; but she is quite right in saying that it is her own sovereign, and the idea is new, and we may have some fun out of it. We are greatly obliged to her for giving us fourpence halfpenny each, and we think we can answer in the name of the whole of the junior school that we will spend the entire of that money on things to eat."

"There's another thing that must be done," said Han-

nah, interrupting the speaker in an eager, determined voice. "No one girl is to tell the other what she is going to buy. Each can buy just what she likes."

"Yes, yes! I see it will be great fun," said Rose, "and we'll all meet in the attic on Wednesday, this day week, at twelve at night. We can tell Hannah about what we do to prevent any of the mistresses finding out."

"Yes, yes! after all, it will be capital fun; I know already what I mean to buy," said Hannah.

She began to laugh excitedly, and looked at Mary Cholmondeley as if she meant to confide in her.

"But I must not do it," she said; "it must be honor bright with me, same as the rest of you. Well, that's all right. Now then, Mary, let us go away by our two selves, and talk about how we'll get the money divided."

"I am coming too," said Rose Perrott; "I want to be your friend, just as much as Mary Cholmondeley does."

"And I am coming," said Agnes Parr.

"And I," said Sophy Colchester; "for the fact is," continued Sophy, eagerly placing herself at Hannah's right hand, "I want to be friends with you too; I like you very much indeed."

"I'm delighted," said Hannah; "I don't mind how many people love me. When people love me I love them; that's the way with Hannah, that always was the way with her. When people hate me I hate them; that's the way with Hannah, that always was the way with her."

"You're a duck," said Sophy. She slipped her hand inside Hannah's arm, and gave it a great squeeze.

"Don't scrooge me so tight," said Hannah. "Mary

Cholmondeley is my greatest of all great friends, because she was the first and she come to me before any of the rest of you. You was cowards, you three, but Mary was brave. Mary came to me when everyone else in the school hated me, so I love her the best; but I love you three too, and we can all come along and be cozy. I am glad we love each other; I'm very glad."

Hannah's blue eyes were now blazing with excitement, and her red face had brilliant spots of crimson in the center of each cheek. She was feeling her power, and to the neglected child power was a new and charming possession.

The girls all went into the field, sat down under a hedge, and soon a tremendous chatter ensued. Hannah capped the witty remarks with still wittier ones of her own; she was daring, shrewd, confident, defiant; she let these girls, who were just becoming her slaves see that it mattered very little to her whether they cared for her or not. If they cared she would love them, if they didn't care she would hate them. By the way she spoke it was a toss up whether she loved or hated people—she seemed to do both by order.

"Now let us arrange everything," said Rose Perrott; "I hate having things unsettled. This is Wednesday, a half-holiday; we have to do lots of lessons to-morrow, and lots of lessons on Friday; but on Saturday there will be another half-holiday, and then we ought to get the postal order changed."

"I was thinking," said Mary, "that perhaps Mrs. Mar-

shal would take it to Cumnor West the next time she is going, and get them to change it there."

"No, no!" said Hannah in a determined voice; "I don't wish that; I want to hand in my own letter to the post-office, I want to see that they give me my proper money—fifty threepenny pieces, fifty pennies, and fifty halfpence. We'll want to take a bag, won't we?"

"I don't believe there will be so many threepenny-bits at the post-office," said Mary, in an anxious tone. "What shall we do then, Hannah?"

"I'm not going to take the money in any other way," said Hannah sturdily.

"Well, now, let us talk of something else," said Sophy Colchester. "We ought to tell you all our rules, Hannah; all about the school and everything; then you'll know what you have got to do yourself."

"To do myself," said Hannah; "I 'spect I'll have to learn lessons, and have a horrid time except when you are all loving me."

"Oh, we'll love you fast enough, you dear little thing."

"Now, do you or do you not think me pretty?" said Hannah.

"Pretty?" exclaimed Rose Perrott; she glanced anxiously at Sophy, who had some difficulty in keeping back her laughter. Agnes Parr, however, spoke in a staid voice.

"If you were not so very red, Hannah, I think you would be quite pretty; you have got lovely eyes, you know."

"Have I? What color are they?" asked Hannah.

"Why, you must know that!"

"No, I'm sure I don't; what color are they? Are they green, or gray, or what?"

"Blue, blue, blue!" cried all the girls in chorus.

"Blue? that's pretty, same as the sky?" said Hannah, raising the orbs in question, and fixing them on the blue, blue sky.

"Yes, I never did see bluer eyes," said Mary in a tone of admiration.

"But my face is red—is it ugly to have a red face?"

"Well, it isn't very pretty; but if you were to bathe your face in buttermilk, and wear a large shady hat, it might tone down and get quite white. With your sort of eyes you ought to be very, *very* fair—dazzlingly fair; then you would be quite lovely, and with that golden hair," said Rose.

"It isn't golden," said Hannah; "it is flaxen hair; it is nearly white."

"Well, well, it is light; but if you had a great lot of it, with those blue eyes and a fair complexion, yes, you would be pretty."

"And you think I'm going to bathe my face in buttermilk, and that I'm going to wear a great big shady hat, and not be able to see the sky unless I squint out from under the hat—well, you're fine and mistook," said Hannah. "I don't care one scrap if I'm pretty or ugly, so I'll keep my red face, and don't let us bother any more. By the way, Agnes, your face is too brown, and Sophy's is all over freckles. It is very ugly to have freckles, Sophy, and Rose has no color at all, only a tiny bit on each cheek.

Mary Cholmondeley is the pretty one; I like Mary's face 'cos it looks so innocent."

"Oh, come, come! It is very rude to make personal remarks," said Rose.

"I know I'm rude," said Hannah; "I always was rude, and I always mean to be."

"There's the gong," said Sophy, jumping to her feet; "it is time for tea; let us go indoors."

Mary breathed a sigh of relief. Hannah was quite a new character; a very delightful and pleasant character, she found her; but at the same time she felt that in Hannah's company she trod on quicklime; at any moment there might be a dangerous explosion, and then good-by to peace. She began to see that Hannah might be a very formidable person in the school.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT THE POST-OFFICE.

Saturday morning dawned, and Hannah's postal order was still a postal order; but on this great day it was to be changed into a sovereign, which coin was to be transmuted into fifty threepenny-pieces, fifty pennies, and fifty halfpennies. The little girls were very much excited, and after a great deal of consultation it was decided that they were all to ask permission to go into Cumnor West early in the afternoon in order to get the money.

To effect this purpose it was necessary to get permission from Mrs. Marshal. Now there were many difficulties with regard to this. In the first place, Mrs. Marshal did not like her girls to go to Cumnor West; in the second, even if she did give leave, she would wish to know what Hannah was going to do with such a large sum of money. She had, as she expressed it, her eye on Hannah Cardigan. Mrs. Cardigan had taken steps to insure this. The mistress watched the little girl somewhat as a cat watches a mouse; she was prepared at the smallest act of insubordination to pounce upon Hannah and punish her very severely. But the girls in Hannah's bedroom, seeing this in their mistress' eye, took good care of the little oddity, and kept her out of harm's way. They all liked her im-

mensely—her fearlessness, her quaint sayings, her daring, appealed to them—they had not had so much fun for a long time as since Hannah came to school, and they resolved that nothing should damp the ardor of this fascinating little person. Still they knew there was considerable danger in getting the postal order changed under, as it were, Mrs. Marshal's very eyes. As likely as not she would say that she wished to keep the money for Hannah, that she wished to dole it out to her sixpence at a time, or at most a shilling at a time—that she was quite certain that was her mother's desire. Now the rule made a long time ago in this school, that the first money present each girl received on her arrival was to be spent for the benefit of the school, was a secret rule. It had never yet got to the ears of the teachers. It was known to each succeeding batch of girls, being handed down as one of the most sacred traditions of the place, but the teachers knew nothing about it. Never yet had one of the secret feasts been discovered, so clever were the girls in defying authority, so well did they manage the whole thing.

However great the danger, there was no help for it now; Mrs. Marshal must be asked to allow the girls to cash the order. After a great deal of consultation, it was decided that Mary Cholmondeley, Rose Perrott, and Sophy Colchester were to beard the lion in her den and obtain the necessary permission. All the rest of the junior school were to wait outside Mrs. Marshal's private sitting room while the great request was going on.

All things being therefore ready, and the fateful hour having arrived, early dinner being a thing of the past,

and Mrs. Marshal being safe in her sitting room, where she certainly did not look for any interruption, Sophy, whose fingers slightly trembled, tapped at the door.

"Come in!" called the head-mistress in her somewhat sharp and stern voice.

Sophy turned the handle of the door, and the three delegates entered. They stood in front of Mrs. Marshal's desk, and Sophy looked at Mary Cholmondeley, who turned very pale. Rose Perrott found that the duty of speaking devolved upon her. She stepped forward, dropped a very polite courtesy, and began:

"If you please, Mrs. Marshal, we have come in the name of the junior school to make a request."

"And what may that be?" said Mrs. Marshal. "I am particularly busy just now, so tell me what you want as quickly as possible, Rose; but, perhaps, I ought first to give you to understand that I am not in the humor to do anything special, for the teachers made several complaints with regard to idleness this morning."

"Oh, but this has nothing whatever to do with lessons," said Rose; "it is something quite unexpected. It is this: Hannah Cardigan has got a postal order for twenty shillings."

Mrs. Marshal had always a keen eye to money; the very word money caused her to become alert, anxious, watchful. She now looked intently at Rose, allowed a long interval of silence to ensue, and then said gravely:

"Are you quite certain what you are talking about, Rose Perrott? Hannah Cardigan, the new little girl,

a child who belongs to the junior school, has received a postal order for twenty shillings."

"Yes, ma'am," repeated Rose in a confident voice. She was nudged behind at this juncture by Mary Cholmondeley and also by Sophy Colchester, and these nudges kept up her spirit.

"Yes, ma'am; the money was sent to her by her mother."

"And when, may I ask, did the letter arrive?"

"It came on Wednesday morning, Mrs. Marshal."

"And why did not Hannah inform me; why did she not bring the money to me to take care of?"

"Because, Mrs. Marshal, Hannah is very generous; and she has, not knowing anything of your wishes, and never having been at school before, decided to spend the money on the junior school."

"Indeed! I was not aware that Hannah had the privilege of giving presents to the junior school."

"Oh, please, Mrs. Marshal, do hear me out! Another time I am quite certain that Hannah would do anything you wished with regard to money, but on this first occasion it is most important that she should become popular, and that the rest of her playmates should like her; so we want, all of us, to go to Cumnor West this afternoon in order to change the postal order."

Mrs. Marshal raised her eyebrows, opening her lips as if to speak. Rose received two more emphatic nudges, and proceeded hurriedly:

"We have planned it all; and, dear Mrs. Marshall, I am sure *you* won't be the one to disappoint us."

Mrs. Marshal was anxious to be liked by her pupils, and Rose undoubtedly here secured a point.

"Dear Mrs. Marshal," she repeated, "you are always so very, very kind, and we have set our hearts on this. There are fifty of us, as you know, in the junior school, and Hannah wants to give us fourpence halfpenny each. Is it not good of her?"

"Fourpence halfpenny each," repeated Mrs. Marshal. "Really, a most extraordinary proceeding. Let me see, is the sum correct? Twenty shillings divided into fifty." She made a hasty calculation, jotted down figures on a little tablet which stood before her, and proclaimed the sum to be correct.

"And you want me to agree to this division of the money to be right?" she said to Rose.

"It would make us all very happy; it would delight Hannah. Do, please, Mrs. Marshal, please."

"You, for instance, Rose, have forfeited fourpence halfpenny, owing to your lack of tidiness this past week; you, Mary Cholmondeley, have forfeited fourpence halfpenny, owing to the different blots in your copybook; and you, Sophy, have forfeited fourpence halfpenny because you spoke English on several occasions when you ought to have spoken French. It seems to me that Hannah's sovereign will pay up a good many debts, and in that way be useful."

"Oh, no, no! you cannot do it," said Rose. "We will pay your fines, of course, out of our own pocket money."

"And what do you want to do with your fourpence halfpenny?"

Rose could not help coloring now, and for a moment she almost lost her cause.

"It is nice to keep a little money by one," she said then.

"Oh, if you mean to be economical and to save, I am sure I have not the slightest objection. Well, this is an extraordinary request, but Hannah is a peculiar child. You are quite certain that when her mother sent her the money she did not ask her to hand it over to me to take care of it for her?"

"I know she did not."

"Where is Hannah Cardigan?"

"She is waiting outside the door."

"Oh, outside the door—is there anyone else outside the door?"

"Yes, all the rest of the junior school," said Rose.

Mrs. Marshal could not help smiling.

"This is a queer thing," she said to herself. "I wonder if I am right in allowing the girls to have their own way; still, the mother did not say that I was to keep the money."

"Open the door, Rose, and desire Hannah to come in," she said aloud.

Rose rushed to the door, opened it, and called Hannah's name.

Hannah bounded forward and entered the room by a succession of hops and springs.

"Hannah, that is not at all a lady-like way of walking."

"Oh, I'm not a bit lady-like, I know," said Hannah. She raised her full blue eyes and fixed them on Mrs. Marshal's face. Now, what was there about bad little

Hannah? She had been bullied at home, she had been abused, she had been almost hunted, and yet never once in the whole course of her short life had she fixed those blue eyes on any one individual person that that person did not begin to relent. They were so frank, so intensely blue, so very fearless. Mrs. Marshal looked at them with a sort of pleasure which she could not account for.

"You want," she said slowly, "to change a postal order which your mother sent you?"

"Yes, ma'am; it is a letter, isn't it, to the post-office, telling them to give me twenty shillings?"

"And when you get the money, what do you mean to do with it?"

"Oh, we are going to split it up into threepennybits and pennies and halfpennies."

"Split up, Hannah, is not at all a pretty way of speaking."

"I never did talk pretty," said Hannah; "I am very sorry, but I never did, and I has no manners, and I, I am bad little Hannah, that's what I am."

"I am glad you have a humble spirit, my child." The blue eyes were fascinating Mrs. Marshal more and more. "We must talk about all these things afterwards. Well, your present request is that I allow you all to go into Cumnor West in order to change that postal order?"

"Please, ma'am, if we may," said Hannah; her voice was slightly indifferent; there was none of the eagerness in it which characterized Rose's.

"I will give you permission if Miss Dickinson, the English mistress, accompanies you."

This was a damper—none of the school wished for Miss Dickinson, who was not specially popular—but Hannah said in a calm voice:

“Very well, ma’am.”

“I will speak to Miss Dickinson, and she will join you in the playground in a quarter of an hour. Get ready all of you quickly; you can walk into Cumnor, you can go to the post-office, you can get the order changed, and then come straight home.”

“Thank you,” said Hannah.

“Thank you very, very, very much, dear Mrs. Marshal,” said Rose.

“Thank you, dear, kind Mrs. Marshal,” said Mary.

“Thank you, Mrs. Marshal; it is quite sweet of you,” said Sophy.

The four girls left the room, and Mrs. Marshal rang the bell in order to summon Miss Dickinson to her presence.

Miss Dickinson was tall and slim and faded-looking; she had light blue eyes and washed-out hair, and also a washed-out complexion. She always dressed in a somewhat old-fashioned style with a due regard to neatness, but no regard whatever to fashion. She was an excellent woman, conscientious, good, but she had little sympathy with children, and was too strict to be exactly popular. Mrs. Marshal, however, placed unbounded confidence in Miss Dickinson, and when she saw her now she uttered a sigh of relief.

“Do sit down, Miss Dickinson,” she said; “I am really

sorry to trouble you, but the junior school have come to me with an extraordinary request."

"Just like them!" exclaimed Miss Dickinson. "What is up now?" she added.

"Well, you know that queer-looking new child, Hannah Cardigan?"

"Yes, that remarkably plain little girl. I know her quite well," said Miss Dickinson. Then she added, after a pause, fixing her own faded eyes on the head-mistress's face, "That child is likely to give trouble in the school; I am truly sorry that she has come."

"And I am glad she has come," said Mrs. Marshal. "What is our school for, Miss Dickinson, if not to reform, to make the bad good, the ignorant learned, the stupid clever?"

"You talk like a book," said Miss Dickinson.

Mrs. Marshal smiled very slightly.

"To come to the point," she said, "this little girl, Hannah Cardigan, has received a postal order from her mother for twenty shillings. I must own that I feel surprised at Mrs. Cardigan sending the child so large a sum of money, but as she has done so, and has not asked me to take care of it for her, I do not feel justified in interfering. The little girl is a generous-hearted creature, and has, I am certain, good points. I will frankly say that plain as she is, I never saw more honest or more beautiful yes. Did you happen to notice them?"

"I cannot say that I did," answered Miss Dickinson; "I only remember a sturdy little person with a very red face and very short hair, who did not know her lessons,

and who was inclined to be impertinent when she was corrected."

"Under your management she will doubtless improve," said Mrs. Marshal, "but now what I want you to do is this. The child has agreed to share her money with the entire junior school. They have actually doled out the sovereign in their own minds, and each girl is to receive the large sum of fourpence-halfpenny. They are anxious to walk to Cumnor West, which, as you know, is two miles away, in order to have the postal order changed this afternoon, and I should be very glad if you would go with them."

Miss Dickinson had planned her half-holiday far otherwise, but it was not her way ever to dispute Mrs. Marshal's orders.

"Very well," she answered; "when shall we start?"

"The sooner the better; the girls are all waiting for you. They will be prepared to go at any moment."

"Then the sooner we go the sooner we shall be home," said Miss Dickinson. "I will look after them. Thank you, Mrs. Marshal."

She left the room, went up to her own bedroom, put on her hat and gloves, and went down to the lawn where the junior school were waiting for her. When they saw her dressed to go out they rushed up to her eagerly.

"Is it settled, and may we go?" said Rose Perrott.

"It is settled, and we will start at once. Rose, I should wish you and Hannah Cardigan to walk with me."

Hannah was at the extreme end of the playground, sur-

rounded now by a group of adoring girls. Rose called out her name.

"Hannah, come here, come right up to the other end of the field. Miss Dickinson is going with us, and she says that you and I are to walk with her."

Hannah trotted forward in her usual Shetland pony style. Had she a thick mane she would have shaken it out of her eyes; as it was, she shook her round red face and looked full up at the governess.

"All right," she said; "let us come on as fast as we can."

"Have you got your postal order, Hannah?"

"Of course I have," answered Hannah.

"Well, then, come."

Miss Dickinson walked first, accompanied by Hannah and Rose, the other girls in twos and twos followed them in a long stream. Miss Dickinson did not talk at all on the road to Cumnor West, but Hannah and Rose managed to keep up a perfect volley of eager, excited conversation across the governess. Hannah asked innumerable questions, some silly, some wise, but all more or less to the point. Miss Dickinson did not even trouble to listen.

At last they got to the town and presently grouped themselves outside the general post-office. On Saturday afternoons a great deal of business was going on, and Miss Dickinson arranged that no one should enter the post-office except Hannah and herself.

Rose was annoyed, her walk had not been half as agreeable as she had intended it to be, and she felt now that she was ill-used. There was no help for it, however, for

no one ever thought of disputing Miss Dickinson's will, so Hannah, whose hand the governess now held, entered the post-office without any of her schoolfellows. The little girl was instructed where to sign the postal order, which was then handed across the desk. A pert-looking girl clerk took it up, glanced at it for a moment, and then pushed a sovereign across the counter.

"This won't do at all," said Hannah. "I want fifty threepenny-bits, fifty pennies, and fifty halfpennies."

"My dear Hannah, don't be so troublesome," said Miss Dickinson. "Take your sovereign and go."

"I won't," said Hannah.

"But I desire you to."

"I won't," repeated Hannah.

"You are a very, very naughty little girl. Please," continued Miss Dickinson, turning to the clerk, "do not take any notice of this child. Hannah, you must move away; other people want to have postal orders changed."

"I won't go," said Hannah. "I don't want that nasty sovereign. I want fifty threepenny-bits, fifty pennies, and fifty halfpennies."

She spoke in a loud voice, which almost rose to a scream; one or two people turned to look at her. Her appearance was sufficiently remarkable to attract attention, and her words, often reiterated, "I want fifty threepenny-bits, fifty pennies, and fifty halfpennies," caused a smile to pass from face to face. Miss Dickinson, however, was seriously angry; she grasped Hannah by her sturdy arm, took up the sovereign, and prepared to leave the post-office.

Just then a gentleman with a benevolent-looking face and a white mustache came forward.

"Why should not the little girl have the money that she wants?" he asked; "you have but to take her to the bank across the road, and I am quite sure they will accommodate her. Stay, here is my card. If you will present that, and say that Mr. Spencer has told you to ask for the change, you will have it at once."

Hannah's blue eyes, which by this time were full of tears, were raised to the gentleman's face. Making a bound forward before Miss Dickinson could prevent her, she caught his hand, and kissed it two or three times.

"I love you, you are a very nice man," she said.

Miss Dickinson was perfectly scandalized. The fact that Hannah was only eight years old was forgotten by her; her face, generally so pale and faded, blossomed into the most vivid crimson. She bowed to Mr. Spencer, and left the shop.

"What a dear, darling man!" said Hannah, who was now perfectly good and tractable. "Let us cross to the bank, wherever that is, and let us give the card and let us get the fifty threepenny-bits, and the fifty pennies, and fifty halfpennies," cried Hannah in an eager tone.

Miss Dickinson did not utter a word; she had slipped the sovereign into her glove, and now she walked down the street; the girls followed her in troops. Rose Perrott came up to Hannah's side.

"Well, Hannah, well," she said; "is it all right?"

"Yes, it is as right as possible," said Hannah.

"But how red your face is!"

"Never mind; Miss Dickinson's face is red, too."

"Have you got the threepenny-bits, and the pennies, and the halfpennies?"

"No, we are going to the bank for them."

"The bank!" cried Rose; "we left the bank two or three minutes ago; we are walking down the High Street now; the bank is in Sloper's Square, just opposite the post-office; we are not going to the bank, Hannah."

"Aren't we?" said Hannah. She stood stock-still, stared fixedly at Rose for a moment, and then flew after Miss Dickinson.

Miss Dickinson was walking two or three feet in front.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Hannah. "Why is you so very naughty? Turn back this minute; we have got to go to the bank to get the money."

"We are not going to any bank," said Miss Dickinson. "I am ashamed of going out with a little girl like you. Nothing would induce me to repeat the scene which has just been enacted at the post-office. We are going home back to the school."

"No, we are not," said Hannah. "I won't go."

She rushed away from Miss Dickinson, and flung herself flat down on the road. There she lay, with her head buried in her hands.

"Hannah, Hannah, get up!" said Rose.

"Hannah, get up!" said Mary, coming to her side. "Hannah, dear, darling, get up! Please, dear little Hannah."

But Hannah neither moved nor raised her head. Miss Dickinson, who at first had determined to take no notice,

now came forward. She was a strong and wiry woman, and she lifted the angry child in a peremptory manner from the ground.

"Take my hand and walk home," she said.

"I won't," said Hannah.

"Well, then, I shall take your arm and drag you home."

Miss Dickinson clutched the child by her fat arm and walked forward. Hannah struggled for a moment, then all of a sudden she ceased to resist. Nothing seemed to matter; that was her thought of thoughts. She did not want a nasty sovereign; she did want fifty threepenny-bits, fifty pennies, and fifty halfpennies. She had pictured to herself the delight of giving this exact little portion of money to each girl in the junior school. The joy of giving had filled her little mind, it had crowded out her naughty thoughts. Now it was to be denied to her. What did a sovereign matter? a piece of gold! Hannah had none of the inherent love of gold in her nature, but she had a great deal of the love of giving; she could have been generous to a fault. Now her very generosity was pronounced a crime. She felt that moment that of all the people she ever hated in all the world, she hated Miss Dickinson worst. Still she would submit, for nothing mattered—she had a dim longing that she might act on by and by—it was this. She would run away and go back to Margaret North. Margaret would know what to do. Margaret would be sorry for her; but she had not definitely made any plans, for her head ached, and all was confusion in her little brain.

The small party, all dragged, and tired, and disap-

pointed, returned to the school. The girls went off to the playground to sit in groups and discuss the aspect of affairs; they were all sorry for Hannah; they thought Miss Dickinson extremely cruel.

"What folly!" said Rose. "She might so easily have taken her to the bank, and that was a nice old gentleman who came out of the post-office. I saw him talking to Hannah, and I saw Hannah run up and kiss his hand—poor dear, impulsive little mite! and he smiled and nodded to us when he passed down the street. Oh, Miss Dickinson is an old horror!"

"She is a dreadful old maid, that's what she is," said Mary.

"And nothing good can be expected of them," interrupted Sophy; "but, oh! I say it is a shame!"

Meanwhile, Miss Dickinson had taken Hannah straight into Mrs. Marshal's presence.

"Here is quite the naughtiest girl I ever had the pleasure of coming across," she said; she pulled Hannah into the room. Hannah went forward, and then sat down on the nearest chair. She allowed her red hands to rest on her fat knees; her crimson face was turned full upon Mrs. Marshal; her blue eyes were lowered.

"Now, what is up?" said that lady; she had begun, in spite of herself, to take an interest in Hannah. "What has this little girl done?"

"Oh, what has she not done?" said Miss Dickinson. She then related the scene which had taken place at the post-office.

"Hannah," said Mrs. Marshal, when the governess had

finished speaking, "I am going to take you into my own room for a few minutes."

Hannah was quite silent when Mrs. Marshal went up to her; she rose from her seat; Mrs. Marshal took her hand and led her into the inner room. The head-mistress shut the door, and then went back to the governess.

"I am surprised that you should have coerced the child in such a simple matter," she said.

"Coerced her; what do you mean?"

"What I say. I know Mr. Spencer very well; he is one of my greatest friends; he is a man of influence at Cumnor West, and he proposes next term to send two of his girls here. You have been ill-advised, Miss Dickinson. Why should not the child have her threepenny-bits, her pence, and her halfpence?"

"The disgrace of the whole thing," said Miss Dickinson. "If I am to take such unruly children out, I must really resign my situation, Mrs. Marshal."

"We will not talk of that just now," said the head-mistress in a quiet voice. "You are annoyed, and perhaps you have had reason. I did wrong to send Hannah out with you; you are not exactly the person to manage her. You have done quite right in telling me, and I will manage the affair."

"You will surely not give in to her?"

"I will manage the affair," repeated Mrs. Marshal.

Miss Dickinson left the room. She felt rather more annoyed than when she had gone in, but after a moment's reflection she discovered that she had plenty of time still to spend the afternoon with a friend of hers in Cumnor

West. She accordingly ran upstairs, changed her dress for a smart one, and set off once more to walk to the little town. In her excitement and pleasure at not, after all, losing the benefit of her half-holiday, she quickly forgot Hannah Cardigan, her naughtiness and her troubles.

Meanwhile Mrs. Marshal opened the door between the two rooms, and called Hannah to come to her. Hannah was standing with her back to the door and her face to the window. She was silent at first when she heard Mrs. Marshal's voice, then she slowly revolved round, and fixed her eyes on Mrs. Marshal

"Come here, Hannah; I want to talk to you."

"Are you going to scold me?" asked Hannah, "because if you are, I want to say that I'm a bit tired."

"Of what, my dear?"

"Of being scolded; so, if you want to begin, I'll just put my fingers into my ears, and then perhaps I won't hear you, and so it won't much matter."

"But as it happens I am not going to scold you, I only want to talk to you."

Hearing these words a slight look of surprise flitted across the obstinate small face, and Hannah advanced a step or two towards her governess.

"Take my hand, Hannah," said the lady.

Hannah hesitated, then her firm hand was held out, and Mrs. Marshal's fingers encircled it.

"My dear," she said, "I am sorry that you should be misunderstood."

"What's that?" asked Hannah.

"That you should be with people who do not quite understand your motives."

"What's motives?" asked Hannah.

"What you meant to do. You meant to be a kind and generous little girl; you wanted to give a threepenny-bit, and a penny, and a halfpenny to each of your schoolfellows—that was very generous of you."

"Oh, I like to give things!" said Hannah. "I didn't do wrong, did I?"

"You did not; but Miss Dickinson didn't understand, and then you got angry, and you were rude to her, and she got angry, too; for grown-up people can be cross as well as little children, and some little children never remember that fact, and they try to tease grown people, and that was what you did, Hannah. You were not reasonable with Miss Dickinson, and I am angry with you for that, but I am not angry with you about the money which you wanted changed."

"Yes, what good was a sovereign?" said Hannah. "I didn't want a stupid sovereign, I wanted the other money that I could give to all my schoolfellows."

"Yes, dear, yes."

"And there was such a nice gentleman in the post-office, and he told us if we went to a place called the bank, that they would change it, and he gave us his card, and I—I kissed his hand 'cos I did love him, but Miss Dickinson was so cross and—and, I don't want to be good, I don't want to be good."

"Hannah, you must apologize to Miss Dickinson."

"What for?"

"For being rude to her, for being so impatient, for throwing yourself down on the ground and speaking in an angry voice."

"I can't, I can't!"

"Then if you don't, I won't be able to do what I intended to do."

"What's that?"

"Tell me first that you will tell your governess that you are sorry."

"But I'm not sorry."

"I want you to be sorry, little Hannah. Just come closer to me, my little girl; I want you to be sorry. Do you think your nice friend, Margaret North, would like you just now?"

"Oh, she would like me well enough. She always knew that I was bad little Hannah."

"But would she not rather have you good little Hannah?"

"I 'spect so," said Hannah, drooping her head of light hair.

"And you'll try to be good little Hannah?"

"I don't know that I will."

"But I want you to say that you are sorry for being rude."

"Well, well! perhaps I will some time."

Mrs. Marshal looked again at the stubborn child.

"I am softening her a little, I shall soften her more by kindness; I cannot forget what Miss North said to me," she thought.

Aloud, she said in a cheerful voice:

"I am sure you want to be good, after all; I am sure you hate being naughty. We will talk no more about apologizing to Miss Dickinson for the present, but I tell you what we'll do, we will have tea together, you and I."

"Yes, tea together," said Hannah, raising her blue eyes, her face wholly full of wonder.

"I will ring for it now, or rather, you may. Go across the room and ring that bell."

Hannah did so, giving it a most vigorous pull. It was an old-fashioned bell, worked with a wire and rope. Hannah, having done so, went and stood in the middle of the room.

"My dear child," said the governess, "there is no time in this house for anyone to be idle; the servants are all extra busy on Saturday, as they have a great deal of cleaning to do, so we will help them. Pull forward that table."

"Which one, Mrs. Marshal?" asked Hannah in an eager voice.

"That one near the window. Clear the books off it, and then bring it into the middle of the room."

Hannah accomplished this feat with quickness; the table was placed in the middle of the room, and just at that moment the servant answered the bell.

"Tea at once, please, Eliza," said Mrs. Marshal; "tea for Miss Hannah and for myself."

The girl glanced at Hannah; her eyes twinkled; she left the room quickly.

Soon a tray was brought, containing the tea equipage; also cut bread and butter and cake.

Mrs. Marshal told Eliza that she need not wait, and gave Hannah instructions with regard to the arranging of the tea table.

"Now, I wonder if you ever did anything of that sort at home?" she said.

"No; but when I was at the seaside with dear Margaret North I used to."

"I should think you would make a very nice little maid."

"Oh, but I arn't a maid, I'm a lady," said Hannah.

"A lady ought to be able to do everything," said Mrs. Marshal. "She ought to be able to lay a table and, if necessary, to sweep a room; the more she knows the greater lady she is, in my opinion. But now, Hannah, we must be quick. While you are putting out the cups and saucers I shall leave the room for a moment."

Mrs. Marshal went away, but soon returned. She then poured tea for herself and Hannah, and Hannah, well contented, munched seedcake and stared unceasingly at her governess.

"Have you had enough, my dear?"

"Yes, ma'am, thank you."

"And you feel better now?"

"Oh, yes! sort of soothed, you know. It is 'cos I'm rubbed the wrong way that I get nasty."

"We all get nasty, my love, when we are rubbed the wrong way."

"Yes, don't we?" said Hannah; "does you, Mrs. Marshal?"

"Oh, yes, dear! we all do."

"I'm so glad you do, too," said Hannah.

"Have you had quite enough tea, dear?"

"Yes, heaps; I feel like bursting."

"Oh, my child; that is quite a shocking expression."

"Is it? But if I loosen my belt a bit I'll be all right. I did eat a lot of cake; the cake was awfully good."

Mrs. Marshal felt inclined to reprimand. All her schoolmistress' instinct came to the fore, but she refrained; she did not want to rub the child with the red face and the blue eyes the wrong way.

"Now," she said, "as you like being soothed, and as I think it is really good for you, I am going to continue that process. What do you think of taking a drive with me?"

"A drive with you? Where?"

"Into Cumnor West."

"Oh! to go to the post-office."

"Oh, no! to go to the bank."

"Mrs. Marshal!"

"Yes, yes, Hannah. I, too, would like you to have that money changed in the way you want it. Come along, my love; be quick, be quick."

"Oh, I'd like to hug you!"

"Never mind that now; we have no time for it."

"I do love you."

"Do you? That's very pleasant hearing. Now put on your hat. Here are your things. We have no time to lose."

Mrs. Marshal took Hannah round to the front entrance. There stood a somewhat shabby wagonette. She and Han-

nah mounted into it, and the driver took them as fast as possible to Cumnor West.

All the way to the little town Hannah was absolutely silent, but now and then her eyes, fixed on her governess' face, spoke volumes. Mrs. Marshal and Hannah entered the bank, which was fortunately still open. A moment later they reappeared, Hannah holding three little bags. In one bag rested the threepenny-bits, in another the pence, in another the halfpence. Hannah looked at these bags as if she could worship them. All the way home she regarded them, and not her companion at all. At last they re-entered the school precincts. They drove up to the porch, and Hannah sprang out with a bound. She still clutched her three bags.

"Now go to your schoolfellows and be happy," said Mrs. Marshal.

But Hannah hesitated.

"What about telling that I'm sorry?" she asked.

"Ah, you'll tell her; will you not?"

"I will, if it will please you."

"It will, my love."

"Then I'll do it. I don't mind what I do for *you now*, 'cos I love you."

CHAPTER XVIII.

HANNAH'S CONSCIENCE.

But Miss Dickinson was nowhere to be seen, and all the girls of the junior school were waiting for Hannah in the field at the back of the house. Hannah rushed into their midst, carrying her three bags.

"Here I is," she said, "and here's all the money; isn't it splendid? Mrs. Marshal is no end of a brick, I love her more than anything."

"You love Mrs. Marshal?" said Mary Cholmondeley, hurrying forward, grinning from ear to ear, and dimples breaking out all over her face. "Oh, I am glad to hear it, but I am surprised also; we all do think our head-mistress very stern."

"She's a darling; she isn't a bit stern," said Hannah. "if any of you say a single word against her I'll knock you down; so now you know what to 'spect. I'm her friend from this out, so she shan't have no naughty words said of her."

Hannah looked so fierce and defiant that the rest of the school burst out laughing.

"I never saw such a little spittingfire, did you?" said Rose Perrott, turning to Mary Cholmondeley.

"Oh, she is a dear!" said Mary; "she is such an original.

Well now, Hannah; what do you mean to do about the feast?"

"Oh, I have got plenty to do," said Hannah; "some of it pleasant, some of it unpleasant. I have got to tell that old crosspatch, Miss Dickinson, that I am sorry."

"But are you?"

"Yes—course."

"What for?"

"For lying down on the road and being so cross. Mrs. Marshal 'splained it all to me, and I'm going to tell her I'm sorry. I'd do it again all the same, but never mind, I have got to say so 'cos Mrs. Marshal wishes it. But don't let's think about it now, she's nowhere in sight. When I see her I'll tell her. Oh, I don't mind a bit—not a bit. I'll just run up to her and blurt out the words, and then there'll be an end of it. Mrs. Marshal wishes me to do it, and there's nothing I wouldn't do for her, nor for Margaret North, nor for you, Mary Cholmondeley. As for the rest of you, you're all so-so; I don't know whether I like you or whether I don't. Now, then, here's the money; let us think of nothing but it."

"I must say she is a very generous little thing," said a girl at the other end of the field. "It will be nice to have fourpence-halfpenny of one's own to spend on sweeties."

"Let's sit down in the very center of the field, and let's divide the money," said Hannah. "I think I'd best have a chair 'cos I'm the Queen, you know. I'll sit on my chair, and all my subjects will come up to me, and first of all I'll give a threepenny-bit, and then the one who gets it can walk away, and another will come up; and I'll give a

penny, and the one who gets a penny will walk away and another will come up; then I'll give a halfpenny, and the one who gets a halfpenny will walk away, and so every girl will have her money, and you'll like me a good deal for giving it to you; won't you?"

"Of course we will, you little dear," said Sophy. "Now then, let's begin. Here's your chair, Hannah; would you like to sit on it or stand?"

"Oh, I'll sit, 'cos it's most comfortable," said Hannah. "Now, then, let's open the first little bag."

Her fat fingers trembled in her eagerness, but at last the little string was untied, and the tiny bag made of white canvas was slowly unfastened. Hannah peeped in and looked at the little silver coins.

"They do look perfectly sweet," she said. "Would anyone like to take a peep afore I divide them?"

A good many girls said they would, and they rushed forward and looked into the bag.

"Don't they shine and glitter?" said Mary Cholmondeley.

"Yes," said Rose, whose turn it was now to peep, "I wish I had the whole of them, that I do!"

Hannah allowed each of her schoolfellows to peep into the silver bag. When this ceremony was gone through to the satisfaction of the entire school, she began to dip in her hand and to produce the coins. One by one a silver coin was given to each girl, Hannah reserving the last for herself, and also the bag. The bag she admired immensely, and considered it to be her proper perquisite. The pence were now divided, and as the bank clerk had entered into

the spirit of the thing, and had given fifty new pennies, they were very nearly as much liked as the silver three-penny-bits.

The halfpennies were also distributed, and so, at last, the deed was done. Hannah's sovereign was divided into fifty equal portions, and fifty small schoolgirls were made intensely happy.

"Now, then, that's all right," said Hannah, breathing a profound sigh. "What day is we to have our feast?"

"This is Saturday," said Mary; "I think we might have the feast on Tuesday, or, perhaps, Wednesday would be better, for Wednesday is a half-holiday. We won't have time to get the things to-day, so we had better put it off until Wednesday, as on Monday and Tuesday we shall be busy with work all day."

"And where is the feast to be?" asked Hannah.

"Oh, up in the big attic which runs across the dormitories. No one ever goes there, but I know how I can get the key," said Rose Perrott, whose face was now full of excitement with red spots on each cheek.

"Well, that's all right," answered Hannah, "and we are none of us to tell what we'll buy. It will be easy to buy fourpence-halfpenny worth of goodies. We are all to meet up there, and we are to have our feast—at what hour?"

"Well, we generally have it at midnight," said Mary Cholmondeley, "when all the teachers are in bed."

"But why should not they join us, poor things?"

"Join us?" said Rose, raising her brows, and looking with astonishment at Hannah. "But it is a secret, don't you understand?"

"Oh, I forgot for a minute," said Hannah. "I don't much care for secrets my own self. I don't see why the teachers shouldn't come; that is, all of them except Miss Dickinson. I wouldn't ask her at any price; but the rest?"

"They couldn't, Hannah; you don't understand," said Rose, in a fretted voice.

"I never heard of anything so ridiculous in all my life," said Sophy.

Hannah's brows began to knit with anger, and her red face to flush.

"Seems to me you're very rude," she said; "and just when I have given you a threepenny-bit and a penny and a halfpenny."

Sophy thought it best to smother her real feelings, and walked away with Rose Perrott. Mary Cholmondeley sat down by Hannah.

"I am so very glad that everything has gone right, little Hannah," she said; "you are quite happy now, are you not?"

"I am so full of happiness that I think I'll split in two," said Hannah. "It is nearly as good as the seedcake Mrs. Marshal gave me at tea. Oh, she's a darling! I do love her."

"If you love her you will get on well; you will learn your lessons and do everything to please her."

"Course I will. I do wish we could have her at our feast."

"But, Hannah, that's just the point, we cannot; it is a

secret, none of the teachers are to know. If the teachers knew—why, they would be angry, awfully angry. They would punish us, we would never have a happy day again. Do you suppose that Mrs. Marshal and the rest of the teachers like us to slip out of our beds late at night, and go up to the attic and eat all kinds of unwholesome things, and sing songs, and make ourselves ill? Do you suppose they wish it?"

"I don't know," said Hannah, but her face looked very downcast. She lowered her eyes for a moment, then she looked full into Mary's round, serene countenance.

"Then we do wrong when we have a feast?" she said.

"Oh, I don't call it wrong," answered Mary; "all the junior school, for generations, nearly a hundred years, have done the same. It is one of the rules of the school; the first money that a new girl gets is spent on a feast, and the feast is held at midnight, and nobody knows."

"It sounds lovely," said Hannah, "only I wish——"

"What do you wish, Hannah?"

"That I didn't love Mrs. Marshal. If I hated her wouldn't I enjoy it just; but when I love her I don't want to do anything that makes her angry."

"Well, Hannah, you must be guided by the rest of us; there is no help for it now. No one will ever know."

Hannah looked straight up at the blue sky; her eyes seemed to get an intenser shade than ever.

"Seems to me that God will know," she said, after a moment.

"Oh, yes, yes!" Even Mary's face became uncomfortable.

"But perhaps He won't see in the dark," said Hannah again, after a moment. Let's have no candles, let's go up in the dark, and then p'raps He won't see."

Mary looked as if this thought rather cheered her.

"Yes, let's," she said; "you made me feel quite horrid when you spoke about God knowing."

"But if He doesn't see it won't matter," said Hannah. "Let's have a feast in the black dark!"

Mary looked cheered for a moment; then once again a cloud came over her face.

"Of all the girls in the school," she said slowly, "I never thought that *you* would make me feel uncomfortable about doing wrong, Hannah."

"Well, it isn't wrong if nobody sees," said Hannah.

"But that's just it, God will see."

"Not if we do it in the dark?"

"Yes; but He will, Hannah; He will. Did you never learn that hymn:

"Almighty God, whose piercing eye
Shines through the shades of night!

He can see in the dark as well as the light. Oh, it is awful!"

"It can't be done," said Hannah, shutting her lips up very stern and straight; "we can't do it."

"Can't!" said Mary; "you don't know what you're saying. Why, you'd have the whole school, every one of them, down on you. It would nearly kill you. We must do it, we must!"

"We can't, and we won't," said Hannah.

"Hannah, you are not going to begin like that! You don't know how perfectly awful it will be. You don't know what the girls will say to you. Hannah! Hannah!"

Hannah sat looking obstinately straight before her.

"It is horrid being good," she said, after a pause, jumping suddenly to her feet and clenching her hands. "I'd love that feast better than anything, and I want all the girls to pet me and love me. I hate being good; I think I'll turn bad again."

"But you need not turn bad; you can be good."

"No, I can't, Mary; you are awful stupid. If I go and join the feast in the attic and don't tell anybody, why, I'm bad; and if I don't join the feast in the attic, why, I'm good. Now, don't you see that I want to join the feast?"

"Yes, of course, and you must join it!" said Mary. "It is your feast, you cannot help it. Why, you would be hated by every girl in the junior school if you didn't join it."

"Well, then, I think I'll be bad until after Wednesday," said Hannah; "that's the best way of getting out of it; isn't it, Mary?"

"It is a horrid way of getting out of it; I can't think why you should put it that way."

"There's no other way, don't you understand?"

"No, I don't."

"Mary, you're a goose!" said Hannah. "There, I'll think it over, and let you know to-morrow. If I'm bad

I'll join the feast, and if I'm good I'll split on the rest of you ; so there !”

She walked straight out of the field, not heeding Mary's frantic calls after her to turn back.

CHAPTER XIX.

REAL BAD.

Hannah thought over the matter with wonderful care. She thought it inside out, and up and down, and round and round. She tried to imagine her own feelings if she turned good, and her own feelings if she kept bad. She tried to think what it would be to have the whole junior school hating and pointing the finger at her, laughing at her, jeering at her. She tried also to realize the delicious feel of having the whole junior school loving her, petting her, and adoring her, making her into a sort of little queen.

Hannah possessed, in her small, composite nature, a very strong desire to rule. Hers was a character with sharp definitions. She would never sink out of sight in a crowd; her small, remarkable face was the sort to impress itself upon the memory. Not for its beauty, for it was distinctly the reverse of that, but for its power. Resolve dwelt in those blue, blue eyes, and sat upon that somewhat lofty, flushed forehead, and on those firm, straight lips. Obstinacy and resolve lurked in Hannah's dimpled chin and in her sturdy figure. She was the sort of little person who by and by would undoubtedly influence the world

one way or the other. It depended on circumstances which path Hannah would choose, the broad path or the narrow path. Either path she would make a mark in, there was no doubt of that.

The next day was Sunday, and Hannah had not yet made up her mind. She never liked Sunday at home, for she was not in the least a religious child. She hated church with a hot hatred, she loathed sitting still, she did not care for the chapters in the Bible, unless, indeed, they were chapters which told an exciting story. She had listened breathless, with awe in her eyes, to the narrative of Abraham when he was asked to offer up Isaac on the altar. In her heart of hearts she thought Abraham a very wicked old man. She had her thoughts about all the Old Testament saints, and most of them were the reverse of flattering. During the sermon Hannah, as a rule, went to sleep. If she did not go to sleep she managed to tease her sisters and her brother by fidgeting, fidgeting, fidgeting. Some of Mrs. Cardigan's cruelest and most withering glances had been directed to Hannah as she sat in the family pew. Hence she hated Sunday, which was kept with a certain degree of strictness at the Meadows. The story-books were put away, so were the games. The children sat on stiff chairs or went for proper walks, and no romping was allowed, and only dull books were permitted to be read. Therefore, Hannah's worst self came out on Sundays, and although Margaret North had done her best to obliterate the painful impression which the home Sundays had created, yet she had scarcely succeeded. She had thought to herself that Hannah must be led by degrees into the holy

and good paths which children who really know what true religion is like to walk in.

Hannah was still quite a Sunday-hating little girl. On this special day she went to church feeling cross, she fidgeted a great deal during the sermon, the lessons were dull, and she did not attend to them; a bluebottle fly came into the pew, and Hannah watched it with the deepest interest, her eyes sparkling, her feet quivering restlessly, her hands dying to grab at it. It came close and settled upon her frock, it settled upon Mary Cholmondeley's frock, who was near; Hannah made a dart forward, caught it, but tumbled as she did so, upsetting her book and making a loud noise. Mrs. Marshal, whom she was beginning to adore, looked at her with reproving eyes. After service she called Hannah apart and corrected her.

"In future, Hannah," she said, "you must sit perfectly quiet during church; I cannot allow a little girl to be irreverent in God's house; it is very wrong."

"Oh, I am always irreverent in church, I can't help it," said Hannah. She shook her defiant little head as she spoke, and Mrs. Marshal was not pleased with her, and sent her away to walk by herself for half an hour.

During this half hour she almost quite made up her mind to be bad until after Wednesday, to join in the wild delight of the feast on Wednesday night, to have a glorious, jolly time, during which all her worst propensities should come to the fore. She almost made up her mind, but not quite.

Dinner came, and after dinner Hannah's punishment was over; she was allowed to walk with the rest of the

girls in the field at the back of the schoolhouse. Only Mary Cholmondeley knew that the feast, the delightful feast of Wednesday night, was in the slightest jeopardy. Mary rushed up to Hannah when she found herself free to do so, and asked her at once what she had decided on.

"I haven't made up my mind," answered Hannah. "I am just quivering; one minute I am for one thing, and one minute I am for the other."

"But Hannah, Hannah, it will be awful if you make up your mind to tell," said Mary. "School-girls can forgive much, but that sort of thing they never, never can."

"And what will happen to me if I do tell? I mean, what will they do to me?" asked Hannah.

"They will send you to Coventry, you little creature; they will hate you, they will refuse to talk to you. Oh, don't Hannah, don't! you will be mad if you do it. Let things go on in the old way. This school is nearly a hundred years old, and girls have been here all the time, and always, when a new girl got money, there has been a secret feast in the attic; it is the custom of the school, and if you break through the old custom you will be hated all the rest of the time you are here."

"Well, don't let's talk any more about it now," said Hannah. "P'raps I'll be bad, I can't say; I think, on the whole, I'll be bad, but I'm not quite sure yet."

Then the rest of the girls came up, and the feast, the delightful feast, the good, hilarious jolly time, was the one sole subject of conversation. It was talked of with bated breath and in whispers, which made it all the more fasci-

nating. When a teacher appeared on the scene the conversation was immediately changed, and the girls giggled to one another and nudged each other's elbows, and looked at Hannah with more and more admiration. She was the person who was giving them all this pleasure; of course she was treated with respect. Unwittingly, Mrs. Cardigan, when she had sent Hannah that sovereign, had done a deed which was to give the child pre-eminence in the school which no amount of learning or good behavior could have insured her.

Yes, during her walk in the meadow Hannah had all but made up her mind to be a bad little girl. She knew as clearly as child could know that she would be bad if she kept this secret to herself. She all but made up her mind deliberately to choose evil; but then again, after tea that evening, the girls assembled in the big schoolroom, and Mrs. Marshal went to the piano and began to play the accompaniment to hymns. The girls joined in the hymns. They sang just like other schoolgirls, neither better nor worse than most. The hymns were of all sorts, some very pretty and taking, some the reverse. Hannah had a great love for music, and she joined in heartily with the others. Then at last a girl went up to Mrs. Marshal and said something to her, and Mrs. Marshal smiled and looked down the room, and the girl nodded to the rest of her companions, and the whisper ran through the schoolroom, "She is going to do it! she is going to do it!"

Hannah, who was near Mary Cholmondeley, turned and asked her what it meant.

"Oh, she is going to sing! and she has a voice like an

angel," said Mary. "Listen, Hannah, listen. You'll get a lump in your throat in a minute, but you can't help it, we all do when Mrs. Marshal sings."

Then the sweet voice of the head-mistress rose clear and high, and filled the big room. She sang the well-known hymn, "The Home Over There."

Most of the girls knew it, but Hannah had never heard it before. It excited her very much, it made her feel both rapture and pain. She listened with all her might, a vivid picture of the home about which Mrs. Marshal sang rising up before her strong imagination. She saw the trees which shadowed the houses in the celestial home, she saw the river of life and the streets of gold. She had read descriptions of Heaven in the Bible, and now she peopled Heaven with the angels, with God over all, with Christ, and last, but not least, with those she loved on earth. Mrs. Marshal, of course, would be there. She had begun by hating Mrs. Marshal, now she loved her, she thought she looked like an angel, like a wonderful angel with wings behind, and a cloudy sort of halo all round her head as she sang. Yes, Mrs. Marshal would be in the "home over there," and so would Margaret North, and perhaps Mary Cholmondeley. Hannah would like to be with them; it sounded peaceful, it sounded lovely, she wanted to hear the harpists harping on their harps, and she wanted to see the angels as they prostrated themselves before the Throne; and then all of a sudden it flashed through her mind that, it she remained bad little Hannah, she would never be there. She turned and clutched Mary by the arm.

"Let's go out," she said in a whisper.

"Why, Hannah, don't you like it?" said Mary in astonishment.

"Yes, yes, yes! but I can't be bad if I listen to any more; there will be no feast in the attic if I listen to any more. Come out, Mary, come out."

Mary hastily and immediately complied. She looked just once into Hannah's face, read the expression in her eyes, and seizing her hand made for the door. Miss Dickinson was standing near the door.

"What are you doing, little girls? stay quiet," she said, in a portentous whisper.

But Hannah did not take the least notice.

"Come out, Mary, never mind her," she whispered emphatically.

Miss Dickinson seized Hannah's shoulder; Hannah struggled hard. The head-mistress, far away at the other end of the room, went on singing, and a few of the best trained of the girls joined in the chorus:

"Over there! over there!
Oh, think of the home over there!"

Hannah's face, which had been calm enough, was now suffused with the deepest crimson. She fought the teacher desperately, she must get away from those sounds—she must, she would. Miss Dickinson held her tighter and tighter. Suddenly Hannah's hand was raised. She gave her teacher a violent blow on her cheek; the astonished lady stepped back a pace, and in the interim Hannah made her escape. Mary followed her.

"Oh, Hannah, Hannah! what have you done?" she gasped.

"Come away," said Hannah, "come away."

She took Mary's hand once more, flew down the corridor with her, and out into the open air.

"Let's hide," said Hannah, "let's hide."

"Oh, Hannah! you will be punished. Fancy striking Miss Dickinson! Oh, how could you do it?"

"I don't know. Well, there's one thing; it's all settled now, and I am bad," said Hannah. She gave a short, sharp sigh. "But let's hide, Mary; let's hide."

"Come," said Mary, carried away in spite of herself.

It was growing dusk now, it would soon be dark. The children were not allowed out at this hour, but nothing mattered to Hannah in her excitement, and Mary had to go with her, carried away by her impetuosity. They crossed the field and went down by the hedgerow, and passed the stile, and got into another field. Here they considered themselves safe, and sat down very close together, side by side. Hannah's little breast was heaving and the tears were near her eyes.

"I never was nearer being good, real good, in the whole course of my life," she said after a pause, "and now I never felt badder; never, never. Oh, how I hate Miss Dickinson!"

"But, Hannah, I don't understand," said Mary.

Hannah turned slowly and stared at her.

The moon was rising slowly in the sky, it would soon be opposite the little girls. The face of the moon looked calm and cold; it looked beautiful, too, and peaceful, and

it shed a white light over everything. Hannah gazed full up into the face of the moon.

"I can't be good," she said. "I know you don't understand, I don't expect you to, I don't 'spect anyone to understand, but I am going to be real bad now, and we'll have our feast—that's one comfort."

"But why couldn't you stay in the room? Didn't you like Mrs. Marshal's singing?"

"Yes."

"Then why didn't you stay and hear it all out. She was going to sing something else, she was sure to. I know what she would sing—'The Old, Old Story.' Have you never heard that, Hannah?"

"No," answered Hannah.

"But wouldn't you have liked to?"

"Yes."

"Then why didn't you stay?"

"'Cos you wanted the feast and the girls wanted the feast, and if I stayed I'd have had to turn good; but now I am bad, so that's a comfort, I'm real bad. Mary, what do you think they'll do to me?"

"Oh! Miss Dickinson will tell Mrs. Marshal, and Mrs. Marshal will be sorry, and she will be angry too, and will punish you well, probably to-morrow morning after prayers."

"Oh! after prayers," said Hannah.

"Yes, you'll be called up and you'll be asked why you did it."

"But I can't tell the real reason," said Hannah.

"You'll be asked; you'll have to tell."

"Then I'll have to tell a lie, and then I'll be badder than ever. I'll be quite bad enough for the feast, and that's a real comfort. Now don't let's think any more 'bout it. Would you like to see me do somersaults?"

Mary signified her willingness, and Hannah, rising from her seat, began slowly to revolve up and down the field. She could turn somersaults splendidly, and even with a certain grace; she revolved round like a wheel. Mary clapped her hands with delight.

"Hannah, you are clever," she said; "you will be a pet in the school, you must do this for us all to-morrow."

"Oh, I think nothing of it," said Hannah. "Shall I stand on my head now?"

"No, no, Hannah! No, dear Hannah; it will hurt you."

"Nonsense," said Hannah; "I often stand on my head; I 'quite like it. I 'spect that's why my face has got so red, for I often stand on my head for quite half a minute; now, then, you'll see."

Hannah poised herself with a nice sense of balance, her fat legs wobbled in the air, her face looked redder than ever; even through the moonlight Mary could see its vivid color.

"Oh, Hannah! Hannah! do stop," she said.

Hannah calmly sprang to her feet.

"That's nothing," she said. "Now let's go back; it's very nice being bad; don't you think so, Mary?"

"I don't know," said Mary; "I should not like to be bad."

"But you are, you know, Mary; you must be."

"I bad!" said Mary; "what do you mean?"

"Well, course you are, you're as bad as me. I think you're worse than me, 'cos you are tempting me. Yes, you are worse than me. You're an awful bad girl, Mary Cholmondeley; you'll never go to heaven, you know."

Mary did not like this conversation.

"I can't think why you talk in that way," she said.

"You are like all the rest; all the junior school is bad," continued Hannah, talking calmly, her eyes glistening. "It is rather nice; shall I tell them all how bad they are to-morrow?"

"No, no! they won't like it."

"Well, they are bad, whether I tell them or not; they are very bad, they'll never, never go to heaven. I wonder they like to hear Mrs. Marshal singing that hymn, I wonder they do. Well, come along, Mary; don't let's talk about it now."

The girls returned to the house; no one took any special notice of them. It was one of Mrs. Marshal's rules never to punish children for wrong-doing on Sundays. If they did wrong on Sunday they were punished on Monday, but on Sundays no punishments were given to anyone.

The girls made their way to the supper room, where all the rest of the school were assembled. Miss Dickinson had a bright red mark on her cheek; she seemed to be fostering that mark; she constantly put up her hand to touch it. When Hannah and Mary entered the long room she looked full at Hannah, and touched her cheek. Hannah saw the mark, and her soul glowed within her. All her great naughtiness seemed to revive and strengthen;

she felt quite glad; she hoped Miss Dickinson's cheek hurt her a good deal. She felt inclined to nod to the teacher, and to point to her own cheek to show that she knew about the mark. Mrs. Marshal sat at the head of the table. She had a sweet sort of far-away expression in her eyes; she was still thinking of the hymn she had sung.

Hannah did not like to look into Mrs. Marshal's eyes. She found it more comfortable to stare and glare at the mark on Miss Dickinson's cheek.

The girls had bread and milk for supper; long rows of bowls flanked the board at either side. Hannah could not bear bread and milk. She tossed hers about, and refused to eat it.

"Do eat it, Hannah," said Mary; "you'll be so hungry in the morning, if you don't."

"It is only fit for babies," said Hannah. She ate a little, but there was a lump in her throat. In spite of herself her eyes wandered to Mrs. Marshal, and she began to think once again of the home—the home over there.

Soon afterwards there were prayers. On Sunday night the prayers were very short, and then the girls of the junior school went up to bed.

The four girls in Hannah's dormitory chattered all the time while they were undressing. They were allowed to talk in English on Sunday nights. On other nights they were punished if they spoke anything but French. Hannah chattered with the others, and stood on her head in the middle of the room, and made Catherine wheels from one wall to the other, and received the praise and congratulations of her companions.

Rose Perrott rushed up to her, and hugged her.

"I do love you, Hannah," she said.

Hannah's face glowed when Rose said this. It was very nice, indeed, to be loved. The thought that she was loved always had the strangest power over her. If ten or twelve very good people loved Hannah, she would have been the best girl in the world, but at present, as far as she could tell, only one good person loved her, and that good person was far away.

"It is all right," she said, when Rose had hugged her a third time; "don't scrooge me up so tightly, please, Rose. I am glad you like me. You are one of the bad 'uns; it is queer how the bad 'uns love me."

"I'm not bad," said Rose; "why do you say so?" She backed away, and her dark eyes did not look quite so laughing.

"Oh, hush, Hannah; do hush!" said Mary in a voice of terror.

"I won't hush," said Hannah. "I want to tell everyone here that I have made up my mind. I was quivering and quavering all day, but I am steady as a rock now. See my arm; see, when I hold it out how straight it keeps, and it never wabbles the least bit. Well, that's the same inside of me; I'm firm as a rock; and we'll have our jolly, jolly feast on Wednesday."

"Why, of course!" exclaimed the girls, who knew nothing of the terrible decision which had been quavering in the balance in Hannah's little mind. "Of course, we'll have our feast, and you're giving it to us, you dear little thing."

"But we were not going to have it; it was just a toss up whether we were or not," said Hannah; "but now I have made up my mind—we are all bad together. What a lark!"

"But we need not call ourselves bad just for having a lark," said Agnes Parr. "You are a funny child, Hannah!"

"Well, you know," said Hannah, "there's no use in putting a veil over our faces: we are either good or we are bad. We are good when we obey Mrs. Marshal and that horrid, horrid Miss Dickinson and the rest of our teachers, and when we learn our lessons—then we are good, and we'll go to the home over there. Oh, it's lovely! when I shut my eyes I see it before me. Fancy! streets of real gold, and people playing on harps, and angels falling down before God on his throne, and the light, and, and the everything! But if we don't obey Mrs. Marshal, and if we don't do our lessons proper, and if we do go on hating Miss Dickinson, and if we go to the attic on Wednesday night, and eat up our fourpence halfpenny each, and do what we are told not to do, why, we are bad. All of us," said Hannah, extending her arms wide; "the whole of the junior school is as bad as bad as can be, and we won't go to heaven, that's all. I do hope we won't any of us die on Wednesday night."

The three girls standing round Hannah looked quite frightened, for her voice was very solemn, and her eyes were filled with a strange fire, and when she waved her arms, as if she was embracing the whole junior school, the girls shrank away from her.

"You do talk queerly," they said. "Fancy making a fuss about a little trifle of this sort; and we always do have our feast in the attic, and no one ever found it out. Nothing happened, you know."

"Well, you wasn't there when the girls died who feasted in the attic," continued Hannah; "you don't know what happened nor what didn't happen. But, there, I'm bad, I'm really bad. Let's think no more about it, but go to sleep. Let's be real, real bad while we are about it; that's all I've got to say."

CHAPTER XX.

DISGRACE.

Early the next morning Hannah awoke. She lay for a moment reflecting about nothing in particular; then she remembered that she was bad, that she had openly joined the ranks of the evil ones. It was delightful, and she was not frightened; she was rather glad than otherwise. She determined now that she was about it to be very bad indeed, to be the worst little girl that had ever been heard of in the school. She chuckled to herself as she raised her head from her pillow, and looked at the other girls. She thought she would have between now and Wednesday a series of larks. She knew down deep in her soul that somehow or other Wednesday night would end all that, she would be crushed or something would happen—she could not tell what. This was Monday morning; she had the whole of Monday and the whole of Tuesday and all Wednesday, up to midnight, to be bad in. She was determined to give herself a real jolly time. She looked now at her sleeping companions. She was wide-awake, but they were gently sleeping, snoring softly as they slept. They looked what they were, as they lay asleep: very pretty, very nice and good little girls. Hannah thought what fun it would be to dash cold water over each of those

three heads. She imagined the start and the gurgle and the cries of disapproval, and the angry light coming into the placid eyes.

No sooner had the thought come to her than she determined to act upon it. Even Mary's friendship was nothing to her at that moment. She was going to be bad, and she would be very bad indeed. She tumbled out of bed, stole softly across the room, approached a jug of cold water which stood on the floor, lifted it in both her arms, and making for Mary Cholmondeley's bed, dashed a quantity of it over her face and head. Before Mary had time even to scream a similar libation awoke poor Rose Perrott from her dreams. Agnes Parr was awakened in a like manner, and then Hannah stood in the middle of the room, and laughed loud and long. Three dripping heads were raised in consternation, and three mouths opened wide to expostulate. For a moment the poor girls did not even know what had happened, but then they saw Hannah laughing, and they sprang out of bed, all three of them simultaneously. Hannah rushed from them, they pursued. She ducked here, she ducked there; she scrambled under beds, she ran round corners. She put a wardrobe between herself and her pursuers. Try as they would, they could not catch her, and all the time she laughed and laughed and laughed, and they got more and more angry. At last she came out into the middle of the room, flung her hands to her sides, and told them to do their worst.

"I told you I was bad; now you see how horrid it is to be bad," she said, reading a little lecture in her sharp defiance. "I hope you feel comfy and like the cold water.

Oh, I love being bad. I was called bad Little Hannah at home."

"How dare you!" said Rose Perrott. She came up to Hannah now, and seized her arms, and the other girls proceeded to tie them firmly together with handkerchiefs. Hannah was then taken to one of the beds, which were dripping wet, laid upon it, and severely chastised by the other girls. She did not mind this in the least. When it was over she said:

"Now let's have pax. Wasn't it a jolly lark! You may do it to me to-morrow morning if you wish."

The girls stared at her, looked at one another, and then all three held out their hands.

"Pax, Hannah, pax!" they cried. It was impossible, try as they would, to be very long angry with her. The fact was this, however naughty she was, she was seldom really in a bad humor; her eyes were now glistening and shining, and her little mouth quivering with fun.

"It's jolly being bad," she said; "how many hours have we for it?"

"Hannah, what do you mean?"

"Don't talk for a minute until I have done my sum," said Hannah. "Twenty-four hours till to-morrow morning, twenty-four hours till Tuesday morning—twice twenty-four; how much is that, Rose?"

"Forty-eight," said Rose Perrott, answering sharply, just as if Miss Dickinson were in front of her.

"Twelve hours to Wednesday night. How long is that, Rose?"

"Sixty hours," replied Rose as promptly.

"Oh, it is a long time," said Hannah; "it's a jolly long time. Now let's get dressed, let's be late for prayers; it's best."

"Best?" said Mary; "really, Hannah, you don't suppose we are going to be naughty because you are. Oh, Hannah! I do wish you would try—Hannah, it makes me so unhappy."

Poor Mary's eyes filled with tears, she really felt very wretched; she could not see things from Hannah's point of view, and failed to understand the little girl in the least.

Hannah looked at her solemnly.

"Do as you like best your own self," she said; "I am not you; I'm Hannah, and I'm going my own way."

Accordingly Hannah went on with her dressing. She dressed very slowly; she paused many times, now to look out of the window; now to stand on one leg and contemplate herself in front of the glass, now to take a somersault across the room, now to stand on her head and try to look at her face in the glass, and see how red it was growing.

"I'll have a fit soon," she said. "I don't want to have a fit, 'cos then they'll put me to bed, and I can't be as naughty as I'd like to be."

The great bell sounded. The girls should all have been dressed. The girls were all dressed, with the exception of Hannah, but Hannah was still in her petticoats, her short hair unbrushed, her face red and defiant.

"Hannah, Hannah, do let me help you into your frock," said Mary.

Hannah darted away from her.

"I'm not ready yet," she said; "it's too hot."

"Too hot? Well, Hannah, I must leave you; I must go down to prayers; I'll get a bad mark, and I have been getting such good marks for punctuality all this term. I must leave you, Hannah."

"All right, go," said Hannah; "skedaddle, go!"

She kicked out her foot, and Mary, angry at last, left the room.

The other girls had already vanished.

Hannah slowly proceeded with her dressing, making little clucking noises with her mouth as she did so. When she had quite finished she went deliberately downstairs, opened the door noisily just as the teachers were getting up from their knees, and stood in the middle of the room.

"Hannah, why were you late?" said Mrs. Marshal, calling the little girl up to her side. "Did you oversleep yourself, dear?"

Mrs. Marshal's voice was wonderfully kind. Hannah hated her for being kind just then; she had an uncomfortable feeling in her heart; she wished to be bad, and Mrs. Marshal was making it so difficult.

"I wish you would not talk like that," she said; "I—I didn't oversleep myself; I woke jolly early."

"Then, my dear child, why didn't you dress and come downstairs?"

"'Cos I was playing."

"But didn't you know it was wrong?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Hannah, in the softest, most serene voice, raising her blue eyes as she spoke.

"But, Hannah dear, I must punish you."

"Please do, Mrs. Marshal. What will the punishment be?"

"I will tell you that after breakfast. Now go and sit down by your desk and begin your lessons."

Hannah moved slowly forward, giving little hops as she did so. Her desk was placed between Mary Cholmondeley's and Rose Perrott's. She sat down, opened her desk, took out her copybook, and proceeded to draw caricatures on the blank page. She could draw with a certain amount of dash; she could make a likeness in a few strokes. She made likenesses of Mrs. Marshal, but this somehow cut her to the heart—she was beginning to love Mrs. Marshal. She tore the page deliberately out, and began to amuse herself, reducing it to the tiniest imaginable dice. She then proceeded with the utmost relish to make caricatures of Miss Dickinson. Miss Dickinson had a long face, and Hannah made it a little longer. Miss Dickinson's face was thin; Hannah drew it thin to emaciation. She made her forehead high, her eyebrows scanty, her mouth peevish. It was only a little child's drawing, but there was an unmistakable look of Miss Dickinson. Mary could not help bursting out laughing; she stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth and looked down. Rose Perrott also laughed, and stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth. Miss Dickinson, who was standing a few feet away, saw this action on the part of both girls, and came softly up behind Hannah. Instead of the neat copy of "Children, obey your parents," which Hannah was expected to write ten times before breakfast, there was a startling likeness of herself

in the center of the page. Without uttering a word she put her hand forward, lifted the copybook, and took it away with her. Hannah made a face at her when she turned her back—naughty Hannah had stuck out her tongue. The girls were delighted, and yet they were sorry. Hannah was certainly making an excitement in the junior school—how it was going to end was the question.

Nothing more happened before breakfast. Hannah, who knew herself to be in the direst disgrace, did not think it worth while to attend to any of her lessons.

“I’m going to be real naughty; I’m just going to see what they’ll do to me,” she said to herself.

The breakfast bell rang, and the girls trooped into the breakfast room. They sat down in their places, Hannah with the others. Mrs. Marshal was a wise woman, and never allowed anything to interfere with the girls’ meals. Whether they were good or naughty, they always had the same simple and yet nourishing food; so Hannah enjoyed her breakfast of nice porridge and marmalade and bread and butter. She drank off a big mugful of milk, and felt refreshed and strengthened. She could do a little more naughtiness with the utmost good will. She calculated what would be the most offensive thing she could possibly manage in the playground. Immediately after breakfast, however, there came an unusual summons. The girls were requested, instead of going to the playground as usual for a quarter of an hour’s romp before lessons, to assemble in the big schoolroom. Both the senior and the junior school trooped in here. There were now nearly one hundred and fifty girls in the room. Hannah thought nothing at all

of the senior school. As far as she was concerned, it did not exist, but she looked anxiously from one to the other of the junior-school girls. They were all looking at her. The taller girls were also looking; all eyes were directed toward bad little Hannah.

Mrs. Marshal stood up by her desk.

"I am sorry to have to make a complaint," she said, "and that of one of the youngest girls in the school. Hannah Cardigan, my dear, come forward."

Hannah felt glued to her seat. All of a sudden she had an awful feeling—she thought the day of judgment had come, and that she was being asked by God to account for her wicked life. Instead of doing as she was told, she covered her face with her hands, and shuddered from head to foot.

"Hannah, Hannah; go, dear!" said Mary; "go, go, Hannah!"

Hannah did not stir.

The next instant a firm, sharp, very thin hand clutched her arm, and Miss Dickinson dragged her forward.

"Here is this very naughty little girl, Mrs. Marshal. Hannah, hold up your head this moment." Miss Dickinson gave Hannah a very venomous slap between the shoulders.

Hannah raised her head and looked at her.

"Now, you're as wicked as I am!" she shouted. "I'm so glad; I don't mind a bit now!"

"Hannah!" said Mrs. Marshal.

Hannah looked at her mistress.

"Yes, ma'am," she answered; her voice was pert, there

was not a gleam of sorrow in her eyes; she had begun by being sorry, but the slap had finished her.

"Please, Miss Dickinson," said Mrs. Marshal, "will you tell me exactly what this naughty little girl has done?"

Miss Dickinson in thin, acid tones began to speak. Miss Dickinson was enjoying herself very much indeed. She described Hannah's conduct of the previous night; she pointed to the mark on her cheek; it was no longer red, but it was certainly slightly discolored. She said that Hannah had given her a very severe slap. At this juncture Hannah shouted:

"Not half as bad as you gave me between my shoulders; tit for tat, tit for tat!"

"Hannah, you naughty little girl!" said Mrs. Marshal.

Hannah remained silent, kicking her feet restlessly. Miss Dickinson then proceeded to tell about Hannah's behavior that morning, and finally she produced the copy-book, holding the caricature so that the whole school could see it.

It was so remarkably like, and so clever, that there were titters from end to end of the great room—unmistakable titters. Mrs. Marshal looked at the drawing in astonishment. She was angry, but she had to confess to herself that little Hannah Cardigan possessed genius. If such a young child could do such a clever drawing, what might she not do when her talent was cultivated? Mrs. Marshal felt a yearning toward the poor child, and yet she was puzzled, as she had never been puzzled before. She knew she must uphold the discipline of the school; it would never do for Hannah to get a victory.

When Miss Dickinson had done speaking, the head-mistress asked the governess to return to her seat, and taking Hannah's hand, led her up to the platform, where she herself was standing.

"You have behaved in a very naughty way," she said, "and I am much disappointed in you."

Now there was not a word of anger in Mrs. Marshal's tones, nor even a glance of it in her eyes; but there was a great deal of sorrow, and Hannah's heart began to beat quickly. If her mistress had been angry and spoken crossly, and given her a very severe punishment, she would have quite enjoyed herself, and felt that she had done quite right to be naughty; in that case, she might hug her naughtiness to her heart, and get worse and worse and worse; but Mrs. Marshal's voice and the expression in her eyes made her uncomfortable, and once more she thought of "the home over there." It would be nice to be in that home some day, with Margaret North and Mrs. Marshal. She had not a chance of such bliss, however; she was one of the naughty, the naughty, the bad, the bad. Her eyes filled with sudden tears. Now Hannah had not the least idea of crying, nothing had been further from her thoughts, and she hated herself for these tears; but Mrs. Marshal, although she knew she must not give way, and must on no account overlook Hannah's behavior, was touched by them, and her voice grew softer than ever.

"Hannah," she said, "for what you have done there is a special punishment. That punishment at present consists in your standing up and facing the school for the remainder of the morning. You are not to speak, you are

to stand just where you are, and you will have a further punishment this afternoon in the shape of a long lesson to prepare. All to-day you are not to speak to the rest of your fellow-pupils. You are in disgrace!"

"Yes, I'm in disgrace," said Hannah softly.

The punishment and the thought of it began to harden her; she did not think quite so much of the home over there, nor quite so much of the expression in Mrs. Marshal's eyes.

"Now, girls, to your lessons! No more staring at Hannah Cardigan, or you yourselves will be punished," said the head-mistress.

The girls retired to their different classes; the senior school vanished altogether from view, and lessons went on just as if Hannah were not standing on the platform in dire disgrace, staring down at the rest of the junior school. She had nothing whatever to do, and soon she began to feel restless and fidgety. Her face, which had flamed with angry color, had paled down to its normal tint of dull red. She stood first on her left leg and then on her right, then she tried standing on both legs together, then she looked down and then she looked up. She glanced at the large window which faced her, and began to count the panes of glass; she reckoned them across and she reckoned them down; she reckoned them sideways and she reckoned them straight. There were three panes of glass going every way—three and three made six, three times three made nine, four threes made twelve. There were twelve panes of glass in the great big window which faced her. Through this glass she could see the trees softly

waving, and the blue, blue sky overhead, and the fleecy clouds racing fast across the sky—for there was a stiff breeze blowing; and Hannah thought, in spite of herself, over and over until she was weary of the subject, of the home over there. Where was “Over there”? Was it above those fleecy clouds, and in the depths, the wonderful depths of that blue, blue sky. Once more her eyes filled with tears, and she hated herself for the tears, and looked away from the girls, who darted glances at her now and then. Some of the glances were angry, some defiant, some were amused, and a great many were sorrowful, for poor Hannah made a more pathetic picture than she knew, and her eyes were more expressive than she knew.

At last the morning school was over, and the girls trooped into the playground. Hannah, who was getting quite a cramp in her legs, was about to follow them when Miss Dickinson came to her side.

“No, no; nothing of the kind,” she said; “you are in disgrace. Give me your hand! You must walk with me in the back meadow!”

“I don’t wish to walk with you,” said Hannah.

“Come, no more naughtiness! Give me your hand this minute!” said Miss Dickinson.

Oh, how Hannah hated and detested her!

“I won’t go with you,” she repeated.

“Come, no more nonsense!” said Miss Dickinson. “I never did know quite such a naughty little girl!”

“Didn’t you?” said Hannah. “I’m so glad; I like being naughty.”

"I shall not even listen to such impertinence. Give me your hand! Come at once!"

The governess and the disgraced little girl went out of the room side by side. They walked up and down in the meadow at the back, and Hannah did not think once of Margaret North or of any of those people who brought her best feelings to the surface. She only thought of Miss Dickinson, and wondered what more naughty things she could do in order to worry Miss Dickinson's life out.

CHAPTER XXI.

LEONORA.

The walk was to last exactly half an hour. During the first quarter Hannah was silent, thinking how she could best annoy Miss Dickinson. During the last quarter she had found her tongue. She began to relate the exploits she had done at home—all the worst exploits. She told these stories about herself with verve and action; she stared hard at her governess while she spoke. She told her about the dog which she thought was going mad. She related how she had fastened it to her mother's bed, and the card she had written. She told of many other naughty, bad doings. It was not only the doings themselves, but the way she told about them, which at last began to have quite an effect upon Miss Dickinson. As she said afterwards, they got on her nerves. She became almost afraid of Hannah; she did not think Hannah could be an ordinary child. She was quite relieved when the half hour was over. Hannah was taken back to the house. Miss Dickinson took her to a room where she herself washed Hannah's face and hands; she dried the naughty little face roughly and angrily. She did not half dry the hands. She then took Hannah's unwilling arm and dragged her to the dining room.

During dinner Hannah sat by Miss Dickinson's side, and stared very hard at her governess, eating her own food with lusty appetite, and winking at any of her companions who happened to glance at her. She certainly was a remarkable specimen of the genus child, and Miss Dickinson grew more and more nervous.

"I cannot stand it much longer," she said to herself. "I quite hate her when she fixes her eyes upon me. She is so defiant and so fearless, and so altogether uncomfortable, we ought not to have such a child in the school. I must speak to Mrs. Marshal."

After dinner the girls returned once more to work, and Hannah found herself at her own old-accustomed desk. Mary Cholmondeley was near her, and Rose Perrott, as usual, was at the other side. Lessons went on, but Hannah had not the usual lessons. She had a long, long sum to prepare. The sum was difficult, and she did not quite understand it. She worked it out at first with a slight degree of interest, but then her interest flagged, and she did it wrong, knowing all the time that she was doing it wrong. She wrote in bold characters at the bottom of the slate:

"This sum is wrong, and I don't care one bit."

She signed this remarkable sentence "Hannah Cardigan," in as bold characters as she could aspire to. Then she sat back in her seat, crossed her arms, and looked up and down the room. Whenever another girl glanced at her, Hannah winked broadly. Here and there in the school little titters arose; Hannah was becoming quite the heroine of the hour. She was naughty, terribly

naughty, but she was fascinating; there was a fascination in her blue eyes.

It had been decreed by Mrs. Marshal that this afternoon Miss Dickinson was again to take Hannah and walk up and down with her, but, truth to tell, Miss Dickinson was afraid. She really felt uncomfortable; she said to herself:

"If I have much more to do with that child she will injure my health. I must speak to Mrs. Marshal."

Accordingly she did so. She found Mrs. Marshal in her private parlor, and immediately broached the subject of Hannah.

"What do you think of Hannah Cardigan?" she began.

"Think of her?" said Mrs. Marshal. "Well, if I must say what I really think, the child has a good deal of character, but she has been badly managed. I was given to understand that when she came here. She has a strong character, Miss Dickinson, and will do well yet, but she requires great tact in her management."

"What I wish to say is this," said Miss Dickinson: "Hannah Cardigan is not a child of strong character; at least, if she is, all her strength has developed into badness—into badness out and out. You don't know what an awful morning I had with her. I walked with her as you desired me. During the first half of the time she was silent, then she began to talk, and she told me of some of the things she did at home."

"Mere bravado, mere bravado!" said Mrs. Marshal. "You ought not to have taken any notice."

"But what she said was terrible. Fancy a child putting

a mad dog in the middle of her mother's bed on purpose that it might bite her mother."

"I don't believe it," said Mrs. Marshal.

"She did it, and you can ask her yourself."

"Of course I heard she was naughty before she came, but then people do not send perfect children to school. They send them to school to learn, and also to improve in character," said Mrs. Marshal. "Yes, I must say I do not dislike Hannah, although I agree with you that she is a very troublesome child."

"Then you will not expel her?"

"Expel her? Certainly not."

"Well, then, Mrs. Marshal, I am sorry to say that I cannot undertake her this afternoon. Is there no one else who will walk with her?"

"You surely are not afraid of the little creature, Miss Dickinson?"

"I feel uncomfortable with her," said Miss Dickinson.

"I do not like her; I could never do her any good. Someone else had better walk with her."

At that moment the room door was opened, and a tall girl with fair hair and a gentle expression of face came in. Her name was Leonora Henderson, she was one of the oldest girls in the school, and one of the best also. Mrs. Marshal, whose brow had been contracted and whose face looked full of anxiety, immediately greeted Leonora with pleasure.

"My dear, what is it? Can I do anything for you?"

"I came in to know if you would lend me the second

volume of 'Shirley,'” said Leonora. “It is not in the school library, and I think you said you had a copy.”

“Certainly, my love; you will find it in that bookcase. By the way, Leonora, are you very much occupied this afternoon?”

Leonora smiled gently. She had a slow sort of smile. She was altogether a very placid and a very good girl.

“I was going to read 'Shirley,'” she said. “It is a fine day, and I thought I would sit in the bower and enjoy myself.”

“You could not give up your time to another to please me?”

“Why, certainly, Mrs. Marshal. Of course I can.”

“You saw the little girl who was in such disgrace this morning?”

“That funny little imp—Hannah, they call her?”

“Her name is Hannah Cardigan.”

“Quite the worst child I ever saw in my life,” interrupted Miss Dickinson.

“I cannot quite agree with Miss Dickinson, Leonora. Now, the fact is, Miss Dickinson would like to have the afternoon to herself. Do I not state the case correctly?” continued the head-mistress, looking at the governess.

“I certainly should, for I am very tired,” said the teacher.

“If Leonora would take Hannah,” continued Mrs. Marshal, “then Miss Dickinson could have her time to herself.”

Leonora stood silent for a moment.

“What am I to do with her?” she asked.

"Walk up and down with her, talk to her; she must not be with the other girls. You may be kind to her."

"Oh, if I may be kind, then it is all right!" answered Leonora; "may I go to her now?"

"Hannah is by herself in the big schoolroom," said Miss Dickinson.

"Then I'll go and find her," said Leonora.

She left the room at once; she was glad of being trusted, and took an interest in Hannah. She opened the door of the great schoolroom; she had to turn the key which was outside to do so. Miss Dickinson had taken the precaution to lock Hannah in.

Leonora opened the door cheerfully, and called Hannah's name.

"Hannah, Hannah, you are to come and walk with me! I am Leonora Henderson, one of the big girls! I shall be very glad to know you better."

Leonora's voice was high and sweet; it rang through the empty room; she turned eagerly for a response, but none came. Then she glanced round the room; she looked up and down it from end to end; there was no Hannah present. The room was empty, and one of the windows was open. The windows were quite ten feet from the ground. Leonora rushed to the window and looked out; she almost expected to see Hannah lying in a heap beneath, but there was no one visible. Leonora considered for a moment. Hannah had evidently taken the law into her own hands, and had vanished. Leonora wondered if she should go and tell Mrs. Marshal. She certainly did not wish to tell Miss Dickinson. After a

brief colloquy with herself, she made up her mind to find Hannah and to say nothing about this escapade.

Accordingly she pinned on her hat, and went quickly down the grounds and through the gates. The girls were standing in groups or sitting in groups or lying about; some were playing tennis, some croquet, some were reclining in hammocks, some were reading novels or story books; all were amusing themselves in their different fashions, and all were happy and at their ease. Hannah was nowhere visible, and Leonora did not wish to inquire for her. She would rather find her without putting the rest of the school on the scent. Having walked through the meadows, where the senior girls were congregated, she now continued her march through that part of the playground devoted to the junior school. Here again she looked for Hannah, but Hannah was not to be seen, and as no one in the least connected Hannah with Leonora Henderson her walk through the ranks of the younger girls was quite unnoticed.

The girls were all very busy, each planning what she would buy with her fourpence halfpenny, and discoursing on the grand event which was to take place at midnight on Wednesday. They took not the slightest notice of Leonora.

Having gone through several fields, Leonora now found herself on the highroad. There was not a sign of Hannah. She began to feel alarmed; but then it occurred to her that very likely the little girl had taken refuge in the house. She was just about to retrace her steps, when a man, driving a wagon, came slowly past. It occurred

to Leonora, she never knew why, to ask him if he had seen Hannah.

"A little girl in a sun-bonnet, with a red face and blue eyes," she asked—"did you happen to see her?"

"A little tot in a holland dress, but she had no hat on," said the man. "Yes, I saw her nearly a mile from here—she was running along the road, panting and puffing. I called out to her, but she did not take the slightest notice."

"Oh, dear, dear!" thought Leonora, "it is much worse than I feared. Shall I go and tell Mrs. Marshal? No, I will not; if I run very hard, I may overtake the poor little thing. Why, she was absolutely running away. I am afraid they are not kind to her; but what a queer, queer little mortal it is!"

Leonora walked quickly. She had long legs, and she soon got over the ground. She turned corner after corner. The road to Cumnor West was flat, but it was also winding. It wound in and out like an "S." Leonora felt anxious and impatient. Once or twice she hurried her walk into a run. At each corner she looked anxiously ahead of her, hoping to see the little figure in the brown-holland dress. But no sign of Hannah was to be discerned. Soon Cumnor West itself came into view. Leonora was now hot and panting. She felt that in looking after Hannah Cardigan she had undertaken a very disagreeable and anxious duty; but she was the sort of girl who, when once she puts her hand to the plow, never looks back. By this time she had regularly undertaken Hannah, and would not give her up on any account whatever,

and at last, all of a sudden, her anxious search was rewarded. She came plump upon a little heap of brown holland lying by the roadside, a little heap with a curly head of almost white hair, a reddish face, and eyes with long curly lashes now tightly shut. Hannah had curled herself up just like a dog, and was sound, very sound asleep. It mattered nothing to her that the sun blazed down on her from the blue sky, and that a gentle breeze fanned her cheeks. It mattered nothing to Hannah that she was really on the highroad, and might be picked up as a little vagrant at any moment. But when Leonora knelt by her side, and Leonora's soft, white hand touched her, and her kind voice sounded in the little girl's ears, then Hannah did open her blue eyes and said impulsively, throwing out her arms as she spoke: "I couldn't help it, Margaret. I tossed a penny and it came down tails, and tails means to be mad, and I'm bad, oh, so bad! I know you'll hate me, but I can't help it."

"My name is Leonora, and I don't hate you," said a gentle voice.

And then Hannah sat up and looked around her, and rubbed her eyes with her dusty hands, making her face look wonderfully comical. She gazed hard at Leonora as she did so.

"Who are you?" she asked. "Are you a white angel come to tell me I'm too naughty for God to have anything to do with me?"

Leonora wore a white frock and a white hat, and her complexion never deepened in hue, and her eyes were brown and well opened, and there was a soft sort of an-

lie look about her, so that Hannah's metaphor was not altogether misapplied. Somehow it pleased Leonora, whose voice grew still more gentle.

"I am only one of the girls at the school," she said, "one of the elder girls, and I was asked to look after you this afternoon. Now, suppose you get up, and suppose we walk home again?"

"Oh, but I am too bad for that," said Hannah. "So you are not an angel?"

"No, no, anything but an angel; but I want to be kind to you—may I?"

Hannah looked full up into her face.

"But I have runned away," she said. "When people run away it is the last straw; but I have done it, I have runned away. You will take me to Mrs. Marshal, won't you?"

"Not I, Hannah," said Leonora stoutly. "I'll just take you straight home and say nothing at all about it to anybody. I was sent to look after you during the afternoon, but I wasn't told where we were to walk; and if we walk along the highroad it is our own affair, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" said Hannah, her eyes sparkling. She got up at once, shook out her holland frock, and presented a very dirty little paw for Leonora to grasp.

"Suppose we do something to dust it," said Leonora. "I don't like my dress being soiled, nor my hands either."

Hannah laughed, her eyes twinkling.

"Let's jump over the hedge into the field, and we'll pick some wisps of fresh grass, and I'll rub myself down," she said.

This seemed a thoroughly comical idea to Leonora, but she immediately complied. They got into the field; Hannah picked the grass, rubbed down her frock, and rubbed her hands. She also rubbed her face. There were now little streaks of green about her—green on the frock, on the hands, and on the face; and Hannah looked droller than ever, but she was not quite so dusty, and when she held out her hand to Leonora, Leonora grasped it.

"Come home now," she said. "It will be time for tea before long; but, if we are quick, no one will miss us or know that we have been on the highroad."

"It don't matter," said Hannah.

Leonora thought she would ask Hannah why she made this strange remark, but on second thoughts she resolved to be silent. She would let this extraordinary child develop herself in her own way.

They walked along now under the shade of the trees in the green fields. When they came to a stile Hannah quickly got over it, and helped Leonora, and showed herself agile and capable and friendly. She took Leonora under her wing.

"Aren't I taking you a nice way home?" she said. "Aren't you 'bliged to me?"

"I am, Hannah; very much obliged."

"But you seem panting a bit, and rather hot."

"Well, you see, I ran after you."

"Did you? Why?"

"Because I wanted to bring you back, and I didn't wish you to get into a scrape."

"Oh, scrapes don't matter!" said Hannah. "I like 'em,

I'm always in 'em. I'm always in hot water and scrapes, and that sort of thing; it would seem unnatural if I wasn't."

"But they are bad things to be in," said Leonora. She stopped short here—she longed to lecture, but thought the time had not yet come.

"'Spose," said Hannah—putting her head on one side and surveying Leonora from the crown of her dainty white hat to the tips of her as dainty white shoes—" 'spose you was to sit just here under the hedge and rest a bit?"

"Well, it would be very nice, but I don't think we have time."

"Time don't matter," said Hannah. "The good of being in a scrape is that nothing matters, and you can do as you please. I'm in such an awful big one that nothing matters. Sit here and rest, and I'll 'muse you."

Leonora took a very pretty little watch out of her belt.

"We need not be late for tea, and we might rest here for ten minutes," she said, "and I am tired and hot and rather breathless. I'll sit here, and you sit by me, Hannah."

"No, that wouldn't 'muse you," said Hannah. "You stay there. Now, are you cozy? You look awful nice; you're a very, very pretty girl. Aren't you glad that you're so pretty?"

"Oh, looks ought not to influence anyone," said Leonora primly.

"But they does," said Hannah. "I'm ugly, and I like to make myself uglier. You're pretty, and you ought to like to make yourself prettier. You're awful pretty—you

are like an angel—you have such a kind sort of look, and such a pretty, dimply sweet mouth. I wonder how you look when you smile. What sort is your teeth—is they white and even, or is they ragged and broken?”

“Oh, dear me! they’re not ragged and broken,” said Leonora, indignation in her tone.

“There, I knew you’d show them when I said that; I said it a purpose. Now lean back, and let me ’muse you.”

“How will you do that?”

“I’ll stand on my head. You watch and see.”

“Hannah, you really ought not.”

“But I love it. Now you watch.”

Hannah bounded forward into the field, and soon performed the acrobatic feat which she had promised. She stood boldly on her head, her arms extended, her feet quivering in the air. Poor Leonora thought she had never seen anything more dangerous, for Hannah’s face was purple with exertion.

“Hannah, Hannah, don’t! I hate it, I can’t bear it,” cried Leonora.

“Then I’ll do Catherine wheels for you; now you watch.”

Hannah revolved up and down the field.

“Now, I’m better,” she said; “and aren’t you ’mused?”

“That kind of thing doesn’t amuse me,” said Leonora.

Hannah frowned.

“Well, well; I’ll sit by you and talk,” she said.

Leonora remembered some of the conversation which had so frightened Miss Dickinson; she did not want to get Hannah on that tack.

"Suppose, for a change, I talk to you," she said. "Suppose I tell you about my home?"

"I hate homes," said Hannah.

"But not if they are nice ones?"

"Well, have you a Margaret North?"

"No."

"It must be a horrid place. Have you got a mother, say?"

"Oh, my dear mother! I should think so," said Leonora.

"It must be an awful place. I hate mothers more than anything in the world."

"Hannah, you are a terrible little girl; you ought not to speak like that of your own mother. Think what it means and——"

"I know quite well what it means," said Hannah; "we won't talk 'bout it any more. Leonora, tell me, do you ever have two voices inside of you, and both of them squabblin' as hard as they can?"

"What do you mean, Hannah? Explain yourself?"

"Well, that's the way with me. I have two voices in me this minute. One is saying, 'Hannah, be good, good, good!' the other is saying 'Hannah, be bad, bad, bad!' And it seems to me that I am listening to the voice that says 'Hannah, be bad!' and I hate that other voice. What can I do to stop it talking? It does worry me so."

"If you listen to it, then it won't worry you, and the naughty, bad voice will stop speaking. Everyone feels like that; I quite understand," said Leonora.

"Did you ever?" said Hannah.

She came close up to Leonora now, and flopped herself down in the middle of her lap. Leonora shuddered under Hannah's weight, which was considerable. Hannah's dirty brown frock made a mess of Leonora's white one. Hannah's red face was within two or three inches of Leonora's.

"You do look calm and still," said the naughty child. "You look as if that voice didn't trouble you; you never had two of them quarreling inside of you, did you?"

"Oh, yes! many times. But see here now, Hannah, we must get up and go back to tea; otherwise we'll be late, and then my naughty voice will begin to talk and I shall feel uncomfortable."

"Oh, what fun! 'Spose we're both bad together; 'hat would be a real, real lark!"

"Oh, I could not do anything of that sort!" said Leonora. "It would make me too uncomfortable, it would grieve mother, and it would grieve God. Did you ever think, Hannah, how dreadful it was to grieve God?"

Hannah did not speak for a moment, then she looked up at Leonora.

"He lives in the home over there, doesn't He?" she said, pointing to the sky.

"He is there, of course," said Leonora; "but He is here also. He is everywhere, and He hears us when we speak; He hears our naughty words, and He looks into our hearts, and——"

"Don't!" said Hannah. "If you talk like that, I'll go mad. He is in the home over there; I don't want to think of Him as anywhere else."

Leonora did not reply to this. She found Hannah a very difficult little girl; she could not direct her nor influence her much. They reached the house in time for tea. When they got there Hannah suddenly put up two fat, firm arms, and gripped Leonora round her neck.

"I'm scrooging you up 'cos I'm beginning to love you," said Hannah.

Leonora wondered if she wanted Hannah's love.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE IDOL OF THE HOUR.

The next day was Tuesday, and Hannah was firmly resolved to be naughty still; but her mood had slightly changed—she would no longer defy her governess, she would learn her lessons. She was quite clever enough to learn things quickly, and she found it disagreeable to do things wrong when she knew how to do them right. She would do her sums properly and read properly, and try to pick up her French as well as she could. She would listen when her teachers spoke to her—that was, to all of them except Miss Dickinson. She would choose bad, but she would act—as far as a little girl could—as if she were inclined to be good until the wonderful midnight arrived on Wednesday night.

She was no longer in disgrace during lessons; her punishment for her conduct on Sunday evening was ended with Monday night. She was now on equal terms with the other girls, and the others, knowing that she was to be thoroughly respected and not joked with nor taken liberties with, hailed her as fellow well met, and did their best to make themselves agreeable. Thus, during play hours nothing was talked of except the grand event of Wednesday night. Hannah's naughtiness would then

reach its climax. Afterwards—but she would think of no afterwards. She was longing for this great event; she would know happiness, the perfect happiness of utter want of self-restraint at that moment. It was an experience which she longed for, and she wished that the slow hours would go fast and the auspicious moment arrive.

The girls were very affectionate to Hannah, and she avoided Miss Dickinson and Leonora, who secretly fascinated her very much, and also Mrs. Marshal. She never could look at Mrs. Marshal now without thinking of the home over there, and the “Old, Old Story,” and the sweet words which had fallen from her teacher’s lips. Miss Dickinson made her worse, but Mrs. Marshal and Leonora both of them brought the pain to her heart, which showed that a struggle was still going on within her.

Thus Tuesday passed away, and Wednesday, the great, great day, dawned. At breakfast Hannah saw a letter lying on her plate. This was the second letter she had received. She glanced at it and slipped it into her pocket.

“Why don’t you read your letter?” said Mary.

“I don’t want to,” replied Hannah.

“But I thought you liked letters?”

“So I do, I love ’em.”

“Then why don’t you read yours? We’re allowed to read our letters at breakfast. Mrs. Marshal is awfully kind, she says we may read our letters at breakfast—she would rather we read them then than afterwards, when we ought to be thinking of our lessons.”

“Well, I’ll read mine when I want to,” said Hannah.

"It looks an interesting letter, it is so fat," said Rose Perrott. "Oh, Hannah, perhaps there's another postal-order in it; perhaps it's from your kind, kind mother."

"My mother isn't a bit kind," said Hannah; "don't you talk nonsense; and the letter isn't from her, it's from Margaret North."

"The lady who came with you here and was so fond of you?"

"Yes. Don't bother me now; I want to eat my breakfast."

"Then I wonder you don't read what she says."

"I don't wish to at present," said Hannah. She shut up her lips, and turning a fat shoulder to Rose, proceeded to munch her bread and butter.

The girls saw that there was no use in teasing her any further. But other members of the junior school had also seen the letter, and the thought darted into their brains that Hannah might have another postal-order.

In the playground they crowded round her.

"Hannah, I do wish you would tell me what was in that letter," said Agnes Parr.

"Well, then you may wish," said Hannah; "but you won't get, so there!"

Hannah turned her back upon Agnes and walked across the field.

"Don't follow her," said Mary Cholmondeley; "do let her alone!"

"She's the oddest little thing I ever came across in all my life," said Agnes.

"Oh, she's all right; do let her be!"

Hannah had now come to the edge of the playground; there was a gate leading into a meadow just beyond; she passed through the gate and found herself alone in the meadow. She sat down by the hedge, and, taking the letter out of her pocket, smoothed it out and looked carefully at it. Yes, it was a fat letter, it felt as if it might contain a good many pages; it was in Margaret's handwriting. Hannah knew the handwriting well. Margaret wrote a bold, upright hand; each letter was well formed. It looked almost like print; it was very easy to read. Hannah knew that she could read all the words of the letter. She pressed the envelope, unopened as it was, between both her palms; then, looking quickly around, she raised it to her lips. She kissed each corner, then she kissed it in the middle, then she kissed each letter as Margaret had written it. She covered the envelope with kisses. Heaving a profound sigh after this performance, she unfastened the bosom of her dress and slipped the letter inside.

"It rests against my heart," said Hannah, speaking aloud, a sentimental expression coming into her face. "Dear, darling Margaret, I'll not read it to-day. It would tell me to be good, and I'm not going to be good to-day; I'll keep it for to-morrow. No, Margaret, darling, I will not read your letter to-day, but to-morrow, when I am repentant. It will make me cry at first," said Hannah to herself.

The great school-bell rang. Mary Cholmondeley put her head out of the gate and called Hannah's name. Rose Perrott peeped over her shoulder.

"I believe she is reading the letter," said Rose.

Hannah jumped up from her place and ran across the field.

"Well, what did she say?" asked Rose.

"What did who say?" answered Hannah.

"Margaret North."

"You are not to call her Margaret North. Don't you take liberties; her name is Miss North."

"Well, what did Miss North say?"

"I don't know."

"You mean to say you haven't read the letter yet?"

"I do."

"Where is it?"

"Pressed against my heart."

"Hannah, you're the queerest girl I ever heard of in all my life. Do you mean that you put the letter inside your dress?"

"Yes; it's pressed against my heart. When my heart beats the letter moves; it will make it seem as if it were alive and full of love. I'll read it when I wish; don't you worry me any more."

Lessons went on without any special interruption. Hannah was fairly good and fairly attentive. She had a great deal of native intelligence, and her teachers liked to watch the sparkles in her blue eyes and the expressive curves of her mouth. When Hannah was pleased no mouth in all the world could look sweeter. Once or twice Leonora Henderson came into the room. She was in white, as usual, and Hannah thought of the white angel as she looked at her. Leonora also glanced at Hannah, and

thought the little girl's face sweet, notwithstanding its oddity.

At last recess came, and the schools went out into the playgrounds. The lower school, in especial, seemed to slide and rush and tumble into its life of freedom. Hannah was amongst the number of those who tumbled. She caught hold of Mary Cholmondeley's arm and of Rose Perrott's, and the three rushed so madly forward that they all fell in a heap on the grass; then they rolled over each other and laughed in the perfect abandon of happy childhood, and then Hannah picked herself up, rubbed her mop of hair more upright than ever, and sat down with her legs widely spread out in front of her.

"Now I'm comfy," she said, fanning her hot face with her fat hand as she spoke. "Let's talk about to-night. How wicked is we all to be to-night?"

"Wicked!" said Mary. "We are not going to be wicked at all. What do you mean? We are just going to have a jolly feast."

"Well, let's talk about it," said Hannah. "Let's spread it out as thin as we can."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that it will be over all too soon, and let's think of it now. Sit down by me, Mary; you can scrooge up against my side if you like, and, Rose, you may sit here, but don't scrooge me quite too tight. I don't love you as much as I do Mary; but I like you very well, so you needn't toss your head in that offended sort of style. Now, then, we are all very comfy."

"I don't think we are comfortable at all," said Rose.

"We are sitting right in the middle of the playground, and the other girls will come tumbling on top of us. Do let's move somewhere else."

"You can, of course," said Hannah, "but I'm going to stay where I is."

"Nonsense! Here in the middle of the playground?"

"Yes; I'm comfy here, and when I'm comfy I like to stay comfy. Mary, you can go, too, if you like."

"Oh, we'll both stay, if it comes to that!" said Rose, with a sigh. She called out to some other girls who were passing.

"I say, Annie and Agnes, come here."

The girls so addressed paused.

"We are going to talk about to-night. Who wants to listen?" said Rose.

"Oh, we all do!" said Annie. "Go and fetch the other girls, Agnes."

The others were fetched in a twinkling, and soon Hannah found herself the center of a group, all seated on the ground in the very center of the meadow which was devoted to the interests of the junior school.

Hannah now began to ask questions; her questions were pertinent and to the point. She wanted information, and she got it. She asked about the other school feasts.

"There was that splendid one that Leonora tells about," said Annie Southern. "Just before Miss Inglis was dismissed, and when little Philippa broke her leg."

"A splendid feast that Leonora tells about! Do you mean that tall girl who wears white?" asked Hannah, an awe-struck note in her voice.

"Well, of course, she's in the senior school now; but Leonora was in the junior school then. Little Patty Henderson is in the junior school now. You have not noticed her, perhaps. She will be at the feast to-night; we all will."

"And Leonora went to one of those wicked feasts," said Hannah.

"Wicked!" cried Mary. "I cannot understand you, Hannah."

"Well, I understand myself, so it don't matter," said Hannah. "Now you can go on. Tell me about the feast Leonora was at. I did call Leonora an angel," she whispered under her breath. "So she went to those feasts. Well, go on; speak. What happened?"

"Oh, it was a jolly one!" cried Annie. "Leonora has told me about it so often. When I had the mumps last spring, and no one else was allowed near me, Leonora used to sit on my bed and tell me."

"Well, tell me now," said Hannah. "I'm waiting to listen. This is my feast," she added, looking round with great dignity at her satellities, "and I think I might be obeyed when I speak."

"Yes, do tell her," said Mary, "and be quick about it, Annie."

"You can scrooge me a little tighter if you like, Mary," said Hannah, in a gratified tone. "Take my part now, and see that the others behave themselves," she whispered.

Mary squeezed close up to the idol of the hour, and looked round at her companions as much as to say, "See

how she loves me, and what a superior position I am in!"

"Speak now," said Hannah, looking at Annie.

"Well, it was a jolly feast," began Annie. "We all went up to bed as usual."

Hannah nodded. She had thought of all this. Her eyes began to shine.

"Did you undress?" she said. "Did you get as far as your nightdress?"

"Yes, yes, we did; we had to undress quite as usual, and we got into bed."

"And you shutted up your eyes and pretended to sleep?"

"Yes. Because, you see, Miss Inglis—she was the dormitory governess at that time—went through the rooms the last thing before she went down to supper, and we had to look all just as usual, and our clothes had to be neatly folded at the bottom of our beds, for Miss Inglis was awfully particular."

"Well, well, go on," said Hannah. She began to smack her lips; she enjoyed this part immensely. "The hearts of all those girls must have gone pitterpat," she said; "just like ours will to-night."

Out to the farthest circle of the junior school there was a quiver now. Hannah really took this feast with great solemnity, which heightened the pleasure.

"Go on, go on, Annie!" she said. "What else did Leonora tell you?"

"Miss Inglis came round the dormitory after all the girls were in bed," continued Annie. "Oh, Leonora told the story well; it seemed to me as if I saw it all; then

Miss Inglis shut the door and the girls opened their eyes and peeped."

"Yes, yes, yes," said Hannah; "like we'll peep to-night."

"But there was no moon," continued Annie. "There will be a moon to-night"

"Oh, 'licious! 'licious!" said Hannah. "The moon will peep in. I wonder if it will wink."

"No, no!" said Mary; "moons don't wink."

"I wish it would," said Hannah. "It's awful 'citing, isn't it? Please go on, Annie."

"The girls opened their eyes, but they could not see much of each other in the dark; and then they waited until Miss Inglis came up again after supper and her steps went down the corridor, and she opened the door of the dormitory and looked in. Her little room was at the further end of the dormitory, just like Miss Dickinson's room is now."

"Oh, bother Miss Dickinson!" said Hannah. "I hate her."

"Well, Miss Inglis went to bed, and the big clock struck twelve."

"Twelve, was it?" said Hannah. "I can scarcely keep still. Oh, it was 'citing!"

"Yes, you may be sure it was that. After the last sound of the clock had died away the girls got up very softly."

"Very softly," echoed Hannah. "Yes?"

"And they put on their clothes; they didn't make a creak nor a sound; they knew all about it. You see, the

other girls who had been in the school before them had warned them of the boards that creaked and the doors that made little noises as they were opened, and everything was right; and when they were all dressed they went in single file down the dormitory, and they met the other girls in the corridor outside. They were sixty of them in all."

"Oh, dear; more than we shall be to-night!" said Hannah. "Please go on, Annie."

"Well, they met and they looked at each other, but they could not see much, because there wasn't a moon, and then they went softly, one by one, past Miss Inglis's door."

"Oh, my, 'licious!" said Hannah.

"And they went along the other corridor, and then they opened a green baize door, same as we'll open to-night."

"Yes!" said Hannah. "I love baize doors; go on."

"They opened the door, and they got to the other side, and then they went on in single file; there are narrow stairs leading to the attics, you know, and there were rats."

"Oh, I love rats!" said Hannah.

"Well, I don't," said Mary Cholmondeley; "I quite hate them. And I hope we won't have any to-night."

"Well, Leonora told me all about it. They crossed a great big attic, but they could not have the feast there."

"Why?" asked Hannah.

"Because it was over the senior school and the room where the senior teachers slept."

"I see," said Hannah. "Be quick."

"Then they went into another attic, but they couldn't have the feast there"

"Why?" asked Hannah, again.

"Because Mrs. Marshal sleeps in the room under that attic."

"Oh, I see, I understand!" said Hannah. "Go on; stir your stumps."

"Hannah, you really are a vulgar child!"

"Who cares about being ladylike at a time like this?" said Hannah. "Well, what happened then?"

"At last they came to the attic."

"Oh, *the* attic!" said Hannah. "Yes, yes!"

"And it was all prepared. There were candles on the table, they had made a table of a lot of boxes, and they had newspapers for a tablecloth."

"Lovely!" said Hannah.

"And there were the things—little tin mugs to drink the lemonade and ginger-beer out of——"

"Tin mugs?" said Hannah. "Are you sure?"

"Yes; tin mugs—and we'll have them to-night; they belong to us. Leonora says they are always hidden in one of the old trunks."

"I see!" exclaimed Hannah. "Isn't Leonora a good 'un? But I thought she was an angel. Well, go on."

"And there were all kinds of goodies. Leonora has described them to me: chocolate creams and brandy balls, and tarts and round cakes, with raisins stuck an them, and currants, and matrimony——"

"What's matrimony?" asked Hannah.

"Oh, raisins and almonds! That's matrimony."

"Well, go on; what else?"

"And apple turnovers; there was nothing wholesome—that was the main thing."

"Nothing wholesome; that's real fun," said Hannah.

"I don't remember what else there was, but I know they had a jolly time, and nothing would have happened,—nothing at all,—if Philippa, when they were returning, hadn't fallen down the stairs and broke her leg."

"Oh, my! and what happened then?" asked Hannah. "Was everything discovered?"

"No. You'll be surprised, but, for the honor of the school, Philippa was as brave as brave could be. Nothing could induce her to cry out. She did not make a sound, although she almost fainted; and they brought her back to her cot and laid her in bed, and got into their night-dresses and removed all the sticky stuff from their faces and hands, and then they called Miss Inglis. Poor Miss Inglis was in a state, and——"

"But how did Philippa tell her that she had broken her leg?"

"Well, of course she had to tell a cram about that. I forgot what the cram was,—something about jumping from one bed to the other,—but anyhow, nobody punished her, because she was in such pain with her leg."

"And the lie was never found out?" said Hannah.

"Oh, you can't exactly call it a lie."

"It was," said Hannah. "It was a lie; it was a whopper."

"Well, she told it, and she had to; and nobody discovered about the feast, and——"

"Did Philippa die?" asked Hannah.

"No, no! she was bad for a time, but she got well; she's quite well now, she was older than Leonora, and she got into the senior school the next term. She has left the school now, and she is engaged to be married."

"I wish the man joy," said Hannah. "Fancy having a wife who tells lies!"

"Oh, it wasn't a real lie!" said Annie. "She couldn't help it."

"It was," said Hannah. "A lie is a lie, whether you can help it or not. But don't tell me any more. It was a 'licious story, but I'm going by my own self now into the field to think of it."

Nobody interrupted Hannah—she got slowly to her feet and walked into the other field. She was very much excited—she wanted to sit by herself and think over things. The thought of the feast excited her greatly—it would be splendid, splendid in the attic to-night, and the moon would be out, and that would make it still more exciting. Oh, the joy of that getting into bed, and that undressing, and that lying down; the joy of that long wait until Miss Dickinson got into her own bed and went to sleep. How they would open their eyes when they dared, and look at the moon and think of the wicked, delightful time they were about to have. And the delight of eating all those unwholesome things, with the certain knowledge of being miserable and upset the next day. The thought of the after-pain would only heighten the present pleasure. And Leonora had done it. Hannah had begun to think Leonora something of an angel, quite too good for an ordinary schoolgirl; but she had been as bad as the others,

and she knew that Philippa had told a whopper, and she never spoke. How calm and innocent Leonora looked, and yet she had enjoyed that midnight feast as much as the other girls!

Just at that moment Hannah caught a glimpse of a white dress.

"It must be Leonora; I'll run and tell her what I think of her," thought the child.

She scrambled to her feet and rushed across the field. Leonora was walking with another girl of the name of Juliet Mayne. This girl also wore white, and was pretty and refined, and delicate-looking. They were talking together, and their talk was of a lofty ideal which they both aspired to.

In the midst of their conversation, and just when Leonora had said, "For my part, I would never consent to anything underhanded, Juliet," she felt her dress violently pulled from behind. It was such a tremendous tug that the skirt of the dress immediately escaped from its gathers, and poor Leonora felt justly annoyed. She looked round, and found herself in the clutches of fierce little Hannah Cardigan.

"What is it now?" asked Leonora.

"I heard what you said," said Hannah; "I wonder you tell bungs."

"Bungs! What do you mean?"

"Whoppers."

"Hannah!"

"Come away here by yourself for one minute, I want to say something," said Hannah.

"Excuse me, Juliet; I'll be back with you in a minute," said Leonora.

Hannah caught her hand; there was a change in Hannah's manner—she no longer treated Leonora with respect.

"I just wanted to tell you that I has found it all out," said Hannah.

"What, my dear? How queer and excited you look! What is the matter?"

"All about you and what you used to do when you was a junior girl. You was no better than the rest of 'em; you was bad; your bad voice talked to you a lot then, and your poor good voice didn't get much listened to, and you told a whopper just now. That's all."

Hannah turned her back, and like a little whirlwind dashed across the field. Poor Leonora felt as if someone had given her a blow. She went slowly back to Juliet's side.

"What is it?" asked Juliet. "What did that queer dirty little imp want?"

"Oh, she's only little Hannah Cardigan, the naughtiest child in the school," said Leonora. "I can't imagine what she was driving at."

"Well, let's forget her," said Juliet. "What were we talking about—about your ideal?"

"Yes, to be sure," said Leonora.

And then they continued to talk in a lofty vein.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN THE ANGELS WENT HOME.

Having delivered her mind to Leonora, Hannah once more crossed the field and seated herself comfortably under the hedge. There were a great many puzzling ideas coursing through her brain. One of them was this: There were no angels left in the world. Even the girls who wore white dresses and had calm, innocent faces, and kind, sympathetic manners, were no longer angels. The angels had all gone to the home over there; not a single one was left on earth. It was the way of the world to be wicked. Each person who walked about in the world had two voices—a good and a bad—and each person listened to the bad voice, not the good. Hannah was like all the rest—she could not help being naughty; it was the fate of being alive, of being born, of being one of the people who walked about the earth. On the whole, the idea, in her present frame of mind, rather comforted her than otherwise. She might enjoy that lovely, lovely feast, that wicked, wicked, wicked time, and yet not be any worse than her neighbors. By and by her face might improve so much the redness might go out of it, and the comical look, and she, too, by another little child might be thought of as an angel.

"But I can never be one," thought Hannah, "no more than Leonora is. I'll be a walking-about bung; that's what I'll be, just like Leonora is. We're all that—all of us; 'spect Mrs. Marshal is; 'spect I'll ask her. It's awful to think of it—only I don't think Margaret North is."

The thought of Margaret saddened the little girl in the most inexplicable way. She felt as if she must weep. Putting up her hand, she touched the letter which still lay against her heart, and made it crackle. The little resting place was very warm, and the letter crackled quite audibly. Hannah loved to feel it.

"I'll read it presently, when I'm repenting," she said to herself. "It will make me cry awful. I 'spect I'll sob so loud as to quite disturb the others; but I won't read it to-day; no, I know a thing better than that."

Just at this moment Mary Cholmondeley and Rose Perrott entered the field. They were evidently looking for Hannah, and when they espied her seated well under the hedge, with her sailor hat off and her hands crossed in her lap, they made a rush for her.

"Hannah," said Mary, "we were having a hunt for you."

"Well, I wasn't far off," said Hannah, "and here I is now. What's up?"

"Why, you've never bought your share of the feast."

"No more I have," said Hannah, with a start. She put her hand into her pocket and pulled out her money. She kept it in a small purse which Margaret North had given her. She opened the purse with deliberation, and shook it. She shook it on to her lap, and out tumbled

the three-penny bit, and the new penny, and the new halfpenny.

"Don't they look bright!" said Hannah; "doesn't the silver shine!"

"Yes, yes!" answered Mary; "but we have not much time left. You ought to have bought something; all the rest of us have bought our things."

"Well," said Hannah, "I had better set about it at once. Is there a shop anywhere near?"

"There's the little village just round the corner. We scarcely call it a village at all; but there are two or three houses. There's the post-office, for instance, and the woman who keeps the post-office has a sweet-shop. She has only two or three bottles of sweets, but you might get enough for your share. Come along at once, Hannah."

"Yes, I had best go," said Hannah. "Does Mrs. Marshal let us go to the post-office?"

"No, it is forbidden; but we cannot help that now. You must get your sweets. You know it would never do for the queen of the feast not to have her share—it would look as if she were saving up her money."

"Oh, dear!" said Hannah, "that would never do. I am glad Mrs. Marshal doesn't allow us to go. I would much rather disobey her than obey her at present."

"You are so queer, Hannah!"

"I can't help it, if you don't understand me," said Hannah. "Don't let's talk any more—let's act. Who'll come with me?"

Rose and Mary both held back.

"Suppose we were discovered?" they said.

"Cowards!" said Hannah, between her white teeth.

"Hannah, you talk very sharp," said Rose.

"I can't help it; but I don't want either of you. Just tell me where the shop is, and I'll rush off and be back in no time."

The girls explained as well as they could. Hannah nodded. She caught up her hat and rushed across the field. She found a narrow opening, through which she squeezed. She then ran across a further field, and at last found herself on the highroad.

The girls had described the position of the little post-office quite correctly, and in a very short time Hannah had entered the humble door. Two or three ladies were there, purchasing stationery and stamps. The postmistress was a widow. She was dressed in old-fashioned widow's weeds. She had a cap on her head with long weepers. It so happened that Hannah had never seen anyone the least like her before. She stared at her attentively, and forgot what she had come to buy. Presently the ladies were satisfied, and the little schoolgirl walked up to the counter.

"Please," said Hannah.

"Yes, my dear; what can I do for you?" said Mrs. Lint, for that was the name of the postmistress. "Is there anything you want, my dear?"

"Why do you wear that queer thing on your head?" asked Hannah.

"Oh, my cap!" said the poor woman. Mr. Lint was only dead six months, and Mrs. Lint had loved him very

much, and this abrupt remark about her cap caused the tears to come into her eyes.

"It is because he is dead," she said, nodding. "What do you want, missy?"

"Who?" continued Hannah, who never shirked any inquiry, however painful it might happen to be. "Who is dead?"

"My husband, love, Mr. Lint—John Lint. He's in the churchyard."

"Oh," said Hannah, with a shudder; "in a grave, you mean?"

"Yes, dear."

"I hate to think of graves," said Hannah. "And you wear that on your head because he is in his grave? How droll!"

"It is not droll to me, miss; it gives me a great deal of sorrow."

"If I talk any more, p'raps you'll cry," said Hannah, looking at her with great interest.

"I am afraid I shall, dear."

"Then I won't. I don't want to make you cry, although I is bad. Do you mind staring hard at me?"

"What for, missy?"

"I want to know if you see the badness written across my forehead."

"I think you are a very queer little lady, but I don't see any badness. You belong to Mrs. Marshal's school—you are one of her young ladies?"

"Yes, I is. She doesn't wish us to come into this shop, or to have anything to do with you."

"Oh, dear, I didn't know that!" said poor Mrs. Lint.

"It's true," said Hannah; "it's not a bung—it is quite true; and when I come here I disobey her, and I'm wicked, and I 'spect the badness is written across my forehead."

"You want me to give you something, don't you, missy?" said Mrs. Lint, who could not possibly cope with Hannah's extraordinary remarks.

"Yes. What's the most unwholesome thing you has in your shop?"

"Unwholesome!" said Mrs. Lint. "I never keep anything that is not wholesome. I don't go in for food, if that's what you want."

"No, I don't mean ordinary food; I mean sweeties—things you suck. What's the most unwholesome of the things you suck?"

"Oh, I see!" said the woman; "you want to buy sweets. A lot of little ladies have been here yesterday and to-day buying sweets, and they each wanted fourpence halfpenny worth—such a funny sum to spend! Is it fourpence halfpenny worth you want, missy?"

"That's it," said Hannah, in a voice of excitement. "It's all on account of my feast, you know. Oh, I musn't tell you any more! Every one of the fourpence halfpennies was mine, and I gave them to the girls. I'm the queen. Now, the queen should have the most unwholesome of all, shouldn't she?"

"I cannot advise you on the subject, missy, for I don't know the circumstances," said Mrs. Lint, in a very matter-of-fact, lecturing sort of voice.

Hannah knew the lecture sound in each voice, and she hurried to come to an end of her purchases.

"Those things—red; I 'spect they're painted," said Hannah; "you give me fourpence halfpenny worth of them, and let's be quick. Now, be generous, and give a good, fat lot. Don't you cheat, even though you do wear that queer thing on your head."

Mrs. Lint was decidedly anxious to get rid of her present customer. She did not like her remarks nor her ways, and she began to think that if she looked much longer at that small, queer, red face, she might see wickedness written across the forehead, so she took the bottle of sweets which Hannah indicated and removed the cork.

"Do they smell bad?" asked Hannah. "Let's have a sniff 'fore you tumble them out."

The woman held the bottle to Hannah's nose, who sniffed with great approbation.

"It smells 'licious and sticky," she said. "It will make us all very sick when we've eaten a lot, won't it?"

"No, missy, I'm sure they won't; I always keep pure sweets. I never keep them horrid mixtures which disagree with the stomach, missy. You may be quite safe with anything I keep in my shop."

"Oh, I 'spect you're telling bungs," said Hannah. "Well, be quick; tumble them out!"

The woman poured some on to the counter. Hannah began to count them.

"That's not at all many for fourpence halfpenny."

"It's the allowance, miss. These sweets are a penny an ounce, and you have got exactly four and a half ounces."

"Are they the very cheapest sweets you have?" said Hannah.

"Yes, I think they are."

"For instance, those yellow dobs over there—do you think I'd get more dobs than these red things for my fourpence halfpenny?"

"About the same, I expect, missy."

"Would you mind tumbling out a lot of dobs as well, and letting me count each sort? Put them in two little piles, and whichever is the greatest number I'll take. P'r'aps the dobs is the most unwholesome, and that's why you is keeping them back. You don't want to murder nobody, even though you do wear that cap?"

"No, missy, I'm sure I don't; but I really think the sweets you have just chosen are the best for the money."

"Count out the dobs," said Hannah. "You're inclined to cheat, that's what you are."

"Poor Mrs. Lint produced the bottle which held the yellow sweetmeats. She weighed four and a half ounces, and then put them in a little pile on a sheet of white paper—the red sweets in one pile and the yellow sweets in another. And now Hannah had a delicious moment, while she solemnly fingered each sweet and counted the number. There were twenty dobs and twenty-one red sweets. This decided her; she chose the red sweets, paid for them, asked Mrs. Lint to admire the silver threepenny bit and the new penny, and marched out of the shop holding her bag in her hand.

She now felt so wicked that there was scarcely anything she would stop short at. She looked wildly round her,

hoping for another means of exercising the force which was becoming more potent each moment within her breast.

As she was walking across the field she suddenly came face to face with Mrs. Marshal. Mrs. Marshal was taking this short cut to the village in order to post some letters. The moment she saw Hannah she guessed that the little girl had been up to something, but it was never her way to question children, nor to try to pry into their secrets. When things were very bad she was certain to hear of them sooner or later, and her plan was to trust a child as far as possible up to the critical moment. She had taken a fancy to Hannah, and she now went up to her.

"Where are you going, my dear?" she said.

"Home," answered Hannah. "It's about time for lessons, isn't it?"

"No, it is not time yet. You know this is a half-holiday, so you have all the afternoon to yourself. It wants quite a quarter of an hour to tea time. Would you like to walk with me to the village?"

"To the post-office, is it?" asked Hannah.

"Yes; do you know it?"

"No," answered Hannah, with emphasis. "How should I?"

"Very well; you can come back with me now."

Hannah wondered very much if Mrs. Lint would betray her when she saw her enter the shop a second time. She managed, hoping Mrs. Marshal did not see, although Mrs. Marshal did see perfectly, to slip her bag of red sweetmeats into her pocket. She then walked on by her governess's side. She longed to question Mrs. Marshal;

she had a great many things she wanted to ask her about—the departure of the angels from earth, and other such like matters; but she was silent, as she really felt a sort of fear with regard to Mrs. Lint.

The little girl and the head-mistress soon entered the shop. Mrs. Lint glanced at Hannah; Hannah winked at her boldly. Mrs. Marshal saw the wink, but she still made no remark. It had not been the first occasion during which Mrs. Lint had been silently requested by a schoolgirl to keep her own counsel, and she kept it on this occasion; not taking the slightest notice of Hannah, and pretending to be a total stranger to her and her ways.

Mrs. Marshal purchased the stamps she required, posted her letters, and re-entered the field on her way home.

“Now, Hannah,” she said, “I wonder what your little head is full of?”

“Lot’s of things, ma’am,” said Hannah.

“What, I wonder? Would you like to question me about anything?”

“What day was it when the angels went home?” asked Hannah abruptly.

“The angels, dear? I don’t quite understand.”

“They all did go, you know,” said Hannah, looking up at Mrs. Marshal. “They all went up one day; not one of them is left. It was a pity, wasn’t it?”

“I fail to understand you, Hannah.”

“I used to think,” said Hannah, “that some of them were here; that you and that others—— But I was mistook, I was mistook.”

“Hannah, dear, suppose I give you a treat this after-

noon. Would you like to come and have tea in my room?"

"With you in your *good* room?" said Hannah, backing, and a sort of horror coming into her voice.

"Well, I didn't know that my room was specially good."

"Oh, it is; and I 'spect you are. Do answer me one question. Did you ever, ever in the whole course of your life, tell a whopper?"

"A whopper, Hannah! What is that?"

"Oh, you'd call it a lie. Did you ever tell a lie?"

"I hope not; I don't think I ever did. I was always taught to respect the truth. My dear mother was a very, very good woman, Hannah, dear. No, I don't think I ever told a lie."

"God hates liars, doesn't He?"

"Yes; you remember what he did to——"

"Oh, don't tell me about that man and woman what was struck dead; I know that story," said Hannah. "No, thank you; I won't come into your good room. If you had ever told a lie, I might come; but as it is I won't."

Her face looked suddenly miserable. She rushed away before Mrs. Marshal could make another remark.

"What can be the matter with the child?" thought the kind woman. "She is a queer little thing. I shall be glad, very glad—— Yes, I am pleased I have made that arrangement; I am sure it is all for the best. We none of us understand the dear little creature, and I cannot help having an affection for her. It is wonderful, for she is by no means beautiful, and she certainly is intensely tiresome."

"I saw you talking to Hannah Cardigan just now," said Miss Dickinson, who came up at that moment.

"Yes," said Mrs. Marshal. "Dear child! she was asking me one or two of her queer questions."

"Have you made the arrangements you spoke of?" said Miss Dickinson suddenly.

"I expect a letter by to-night's post which will tell me, one way or the other," said Mrs. Marshal.

"I thought I would ask you if you would let me leave at the end of the present term," continued Miss Dickinson. "Since Hannah Cardigan came to the school I feel queerly nervous. I don't believe I can manage her. Sometimes I think she is scarcely all there."

"Oh, you are quite mistaken!" said Mrs. Marshal. "She is a very clever little child—very original, very daring; she will make a splendid character."

"Particularly if you can make that arrangement."

"Yes, I am almost certain I can. I have written very plainly to Mrs. Cardigan, and also to Miss North. I am sure all will be as I wish."

"And you will not think it necessary for me to give you a term's notice?" continued Miss Dickinson.

"Certainly not; I shall excuse that."

"Because I have heard of an excellent school in Germany; in fact, the situation has been offered to me. I hesitated to accept, because I am fond of many of the girls here, and you have always been more than kind."

"I quite understand," said Mrs. Marshal kindly. "You must go, if you wish it. I shall regret to lose you; but if Miss North would come here, I will give her your post."

"And she would understand Hannah."

"Yes; that is one of the principal reasons why I wish for her."

"Thank you," said Miss Dickinson very slowly. She walked across the playground, and Mrs. Marshal entered the house by her private door.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CHOICE.

The junior school always had supper at half-past seven. Supper was a simple meal, consisting of a piece of bread and butter and a mug of milk, but the girls were hungry and enjoyed it. Supper usually occupied barely a quarter of an hour. Then the girls of the junior school had their time to themselves until eight o'clock. At eight o'clock they went up to bed. If they were really very quick with supper, they sometimes had twenty minutes at their disposal. These last twenty minutes of the day were regarded as specially precious. It was during these brief, delightful, fleeting moments that they told each other their most sacred and valuable secrets; that they talked of those things which were nearest to their hearts—for they were allowed to speak English then, although the rest of the time, except on half-holidays, they were expected to speak in French.

On this special night excitement gleamed in every eye; smiles wreathed each mouth. Was not midnight little more than four hours off? And at midnight would not there be festivity, jollity, secret fun—all that a schoolgirl regards as most delightful? And queer little Hannah Cardigan was the cause of it all!—Hannah, who was now,

in the eyes of everyone in the whole junior school, the idol and the darling. Her queer, red, plain little face was thought more attractive than the beautiful classical features of the handsome girls in the school. Hannah was Hannah, and there had been never anyone like her at Cumnor West School before. On this occasion Hannah would have had, had she so willed it, plenty of companions to enjoy the precious twenty minutes with, but the little girl did not wish for friends just then. There was a queer feeling growing and growing in her heart. Badness was not nice—that was the thought that was coming over her. Badness was becoming so bad that it pained her; the good voice was clamoring in a way which was most uncomfortable. She began to feel that it might not be so lovely to steal into bed with the knowledge that she must put on her clothes again at twelve o'clock, and slip upstairs in the dead of night to enjoy a stolen pleasure.

“If it had been at midday I shouldn’t care a bit,” said Hannah to herself; “but at midnight things seem very big and very black. I am glad at least there will be a moon to-night, but I hope, I do hope, it won’t wink at me.”

She ran away, all by herself. It was dark now, for autumn was fast settling over the land, but Hannah found a stray candle. She was not allowed to go to her bedroom in the daytime—it was one of the rules of the school; but Hannah was in a mood to defy all ordinary rules. She found the candle and matches; she set light to the candle and rushed upstairs. Soon she was seated

by her own special bed. She unfastened the bosom of her dress hastily, and pulled out her precious letter. Come what would, come what may, she would read it. She tore open the envelope, pulled the letter out of its sheath, and spread it out before her.

Margaret had taken great pains with the writing. Hannah could read print very nicely, and printed writing equally well. She began now to read Margaret's letter. It ran as follows:

"MY DEAR LITTLE HANNAH: I have been thinking a great deal about you. Every morning I kneel down, and I pray to God to help you. Every night I do the same. I ask God to do a great many things for you, Hannah, and I am quite sure He will hear my prayer, for He always does hear the prayers of those who ask that others may be made better. I am very anxious about you, my sweet little girl, for I love you so much; and so I ask God to help you to refuse the evil and to choose the good."

"Oh, bother, bother!" cried Hannah, under her breath. "I must go on reading now. Something seems to be pulling me to go on; but I wish I had kept it until to-morrow. 'To refuse the evil and to choose the good,' but that's just what I'm not doing, Margaret; that's just what I'm not doing."

She bent her head again over the page. The candle was flickering in the breeze; shadows seemed to dance between the little reader and the letter.

"You know quite well, Hannah, what I mean," said the writer, "and I am sure you are trying. I have heard from

Mrs. Marshal, and she speaks well of you. She says you have a great deal to learn; that you have strong passions which must be overcome, but she thinks you are a fine character. You see, darling, I do not mind praising you, for I am sure that some day, if you now refuse the evil and choose the good, you will be a splendid woman. It is worth while, Hannah; believe me, it is worth while. Refusing the evil means so much, darling; choosing the good means such an immensity! It means peace in your heart; it means strength and courage in your face; it means the smile of God shining out of your eyes; it means that you will help others instead of hindering them; it means that you will lead a grand life, and that in the end you will have victory; it means heaven in the end, Hannah, and the smile of Christ, the smile of God. I hope before long that I shall see you again. I may have a pleasant surprise for you—but more of that another day. Only, Hannah, Hannah, do let me hear that God has answered my prayer, and that you, dear little Hannah, have chosen the good.”

“Oh, Margaret, Margaret!” sobbed Hannah. “I knew I’d cry awful when I read this letter. There, I must stop now! The clock is striking eight. I won’t meet the other girls yet. Margaret, Margaret; oh, Margaret! The smile of God, and heaven at the end! But I cannot have the smile of God. I have chose the bad, Margaret, I have chose the bad! Oh, Margaret! oh, Margaret!”

Hannah crushed up the letter until it became a wet ball in the palm of her wet hand; her tears were streaming; she put up her other hand to wipe them away. She

crushed the letter into her pocket, blew out the candle hastily, and rushed downstairs. She did not much care where she went; she only wanted to be alone. A side door was open, and Hannah, careless of the consequences, rushed out into the night. The moon was not yet up, but there were a great many stars shining in the sky. They shone down on Hannah, and seemed, each of them, to be little eyes from some of God's angels.

"The angels who went away," thought the child to herself, "'cos they couldn't stand this wicked, wicked world. Oh, I'll never see them, I'll never see them, 'cos I have chose the bad. Oh! why cannot I choose the good even now? It would be 'mendous difficult, but I might, I might. I wonder if I dare?"

She stood perfectly still as the thought came over her; it swept over her with a mighty force. She was no ordinary child, and she did not feel things in the ordinary way. Deep down now into the very source of her life the pain swept. It swept over her, and then the next instant she found herself down on her knees.

"God in heaven, help me to choose the good!" cried Hannah.

It was a whispered cry, but it traveled far past the shining stars—up higher, to the home over there.

At this instant somebody was heard calling Hannah.

"Hannah! Hannah! where are you? It is time for bed. Miss Dickinson will know. Come in, Hannah; come in!"

The voice belonged to Mary Cholmondeley. Hannah had dropped on her knees; she jumped up hastily, and ran towards Mary.

"What is it, Hannah? Why, your hand is wet and your face—you have been crying. What is it, Hannah, darling?"

"Nothing—I mean you will know presently," said Hannah. "I want to go and see Mrs. Marshal."

"But you can't see her now; it's not the hour. Oh, Hannah! don't do anything to-night; it will just arouse suspicion. Do wait until to-morrow, Hannah, Hannah dear!"

"Don't keep me," said Hannah; "I must go, I'll come back to you presently."

"I wonder what she means," thought Mary to herself. "I never saw anyone so queer, and she was crying. What could she have been crying about—bold little Hannah, who looks as if she could never shed a single tear—what can it mean?"

"Did you find Hannah?" asked Rose Perrott at that moment.

"Yes, she was out in the field and the grass is covered with dew, and she came in looking so wet and queer, and she was crying, Rose. What can it mean?"

"Oh, bother! it doesn't matter what it means," said Rose. "Do come up to bed. Has she gone upstairs?"

"No, that's the queer thing; she wants to see Mrs. Marshal. What can she want with her now?"

"I am sure I neither know nor care," said Rose.

"But, Rose, listen: do you think it just possible that she wants to see Mrs. Marshal to—to tell?"

"To tell?" said Rose, stopping still and looking full into Mary's face. "To tell, Mary? You must be mad.

Oh, do come on, and don't let's talk any more nonsense. We must all be properly in bed, our clothes neatly folded, and our faces and hands washed before Miss Dickinson comes, and we have barely a quarter of an hour to do it in. We've wasted all this precious time looking for Hannah. For my part I'm sick of her; I wish she had never come to the school."

"Oh, that is wrong, when she gives us our treat!"

"Well, I forgot that, of course; but even a treat is not worth everything, and Hannah's queer ways are too annoying."

"Let's go upstairs now, Rose," said Mary.

Rose followed her companion without making any further remark.

Meanwhile, Hannah had dashed into places which were altogether forbidden to the girls of the junior school. She had opened baize doors, which were only sacred to the senior girls, to the teachers and the head-mistress. On her way she came flop up against Leonora Henderson.

It was the fashion for the girls of the senior school to dress especially for the evening, and Leonora wore a dress now of the palest apple-green; the dress was made of soft silk, and it fitted her lissom young figure and seemed to add additional gold to the gold of her hair, and to give a sweeter expression to the brown eyes. She came flop up against wild little Hannah. Hannah's face was stained with her tears; her brown holland dress was dirty—she looked wild and disreputable.

"Hannah, you here!" said Leonora.

"Yes; never mind me. Let me pass, please," said Hannah.

"But Hannah, the girls of the junior school are not allowed in here."

"I don't care nothin' for no 'allows,'" said Hannah. "I'm here, and I'm going to stay. Where's Mrs. Marshal?"

"She is in the drawing room. This is the hour when she entertains the senior girls. We are all going to meet to do needlework and read aloud."

"How horrid and proper!" said Hannah in a loud voice. "Let me pass; I must see Mrs. Marshal at once."

"But you can't—you can't come into the drawing room in that guise. There are two or three visitors there to-night, some gentlemen as well as ladies."

"I don't care nothin' 'bout them," said Hannah. She pushed wildly past Leonora, who stood and gazed after her in some astonishment. The next instant the drawing-room door was violently opened and Hannah appeared on the threshold. A gentleman was about to sing, and one or two girls were standing up with looks of interest on their faces; others were seated in little knots close together, doing fancy embroidery. There were colored silks about, and little bits of gay ribbon, and other tokens of pretty feminine employments. There was to be a fancy fair at Cumnor West in the following winter, and the girls were busy already, making things for it. They all looked up and stopped their different employments; the room was bright with lamplight, and a fire was burning in the grate. To Hannah it looked like paradise, and she herself must

have had something of the expression of the lost Peri at the gate. Everyone stopped. The gentleman, who was about to place his music on the piano, felt a smile, which he hastily endeavored to suppress, stealing across his face. Mrs. Marshal, who was walking across the room, stared, and a displeased expression came into her eyes. The next moment Hannah had rushed wildly up to her.

"I want you," she said, catching hold of her governess.

"I cannot attend to you, Hannah. Go away; it is very naughty of you to come in here. Go away at once."

"I don't care, I want you. You've got to do it—you've got to do it."

There was a passion in the child's voice which arrested Mrs. Marshal, angry as she felt at this intrusion.

"Well, Hannah, what is it?" said the governess. "What do you want me to do?"

"You've got to sing it."

"To sing what, my dear?"

"The 'Home over There'—you've got to sing it now. Here's the piano—come."

"I cannot sing it now, Hannah; I really cannot."

"You must, you shall. Come, here's the piano. Come and sing it once—come and sing it. Oh, come and sing it,—the 'Home over There,'—just one verse, just one."

"What is the matter with the little girl?" said the gentleman who was about to sing himself. "What do you want, dear? Can I do anything for you?"

"No, no! She wants me to sing a hymn," said Mrs. Marshal. "She is a queer little child, and looks terribly excited. Hannah, are you ill?"

"No, I'm not ill; but I want you to sing it—sing it quick. Never mind the others; there's no angels here—they've all gone away. Sing it quick—the 'Home over There,' the 'Home over There.'"

"Why not sing it?" said the gentleman. "By the way, I think I know this little girl. She is the one who wanted her postal order changed into fourpence halfpennies. Did they do what I asked at the bank, my dear?"

"Oh, please never mind that now!" said Hannah, just darting a feverish glance at him. "Tell her to sing it—tell her to sing it."

"Do just sing one verse to please the child," said Mr. Spencer, looking full at Mrs. Marshal.

She glanced back at him; then she looked at Hannah. Hannah's conduct was quite unprecedented—but, suppose there was reason in it. Suppose she quenched the angel in the child, if she refused?

"Well, I am displeased, and I think it a most extraordinary thing; but I'll sing one verse," she said.

She went to the piano, Hannah following her. The piano was already open; the head-mistress sat down. She knew the words by heart; her accompaniment ran in little tinkling notes over the instrument. Then her voice sounded out, clear and sweet. When she came to the refrain it was taken up by many voices in the room—Mr. Spencer's deep bass, the girls' trebles, while Mrs. Marshal's own notes sank to a deep soprano.

"'Over there—Over there—the Home over There.'"

At the conclusion of the first verse the head-mistress stopped.

Hannah was now standing pale as death; all the rose tint had left her face, only her eyes were bluer than ever; those eyes were full of suppressed tears, but none were shed. She said, "Thank you, ma'am," in a solemn voice, and then she turned and walked abruptly out of the room.

"An extraordinary child; an extraordinary request," said Mr. Spencer. "What did it mean, do you think, Mrs. Marshal?"

"I do not understand it, nor the child either," said Mrs. Marshal.

No one laughed. The little incident of Hannah's arrival, with her passionate cry for the "Home over There," and then of her speedy exit after her wish had been gratified, impressed people; they felt heavy-hearted—they scarcely knew why.

Meanwhile, Hannah herself went slowly, very slowly, up the stairs to the dormitory. The singing of the hymn had decided her; she would do it, she would refuse the evil and choose the good. The path before her was extremely difficult, but Hannah was not one, once her mind was fully made up, to shirk difficulties.

She entered the dormitory to be greeted instantly by her companions, but the look on her face chilled and half frightened them. They nodded to one another, and made up their minds to let her alone.

"There is something the matter with her," whispered Mary to Rose; "but we had best not talk of it. She'll be all right, of course—she'll be all right when the time comes."

But somehow the flavor seemed to go out of the feast,

and the promised pleasure lost its delight. The girls all undressed slowly and quietly. They each folded up their things, and the five heads were lying on the five pillows when Miss Dickinson came into the room.

Miss Dickinson had heard from another teacher of Hannah's extraordinary behavior in the drawing room, and she now went up to the little girl and stared at her fixedly. Hannah looked back at her, but there was no defiance in her blue eyes. At first Miss Dickinson had felt inclined to scold, but she refrained. There was something about Hannah which forbade her to be harsh with her just now. Instead of scolding, therefore, she stooped down and kissed the child.

"Good-night, my dear," she said. "Good-night to you all, girls; sleep well, sleep well."

She went out of the dormitory, closing the door behind her.

CHAPTER XXV.

BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON.

The moon came out presently in great splendor, and looked in at the dormitory window. Hannah at first felt inclined to cover her face with the sheet in order not to see the face of the moon, but the next moment she changed her mind. She pulled down the sheet, and turned her head slightly, so that she could gaze at it. She hoped earnestly that the moon would not wink; it did not wink. It looked very pure and cold and calm and lovely. It was sailing in great majesty across the dark blue sky; one or two stars were also visible. Hannah had made up her mind that the stars were really angels who had gone away. She looked at them with intense interest, and thought harder than ever of the home over there.

"Hannah!" said the voice of Mary Cholmondeley.

"Yes?" said Hannah in a whisper.

"Would not you like to pull down the blind? Doesn't the moon worry you?"

"No; I like it," answered Hannah.

"But it is shining right across your bed."

"I like it," repeated Hannah.

"They say," continued Mary, "that when the moon strikes full on a person, the person sometimes goes mad."

"I don't care what they say," answered Hannah. "I like the moon."

After that Mary was silent. Rose, notwithstanding her excitement, had dropped asleep. After all, there were nearly four hours before the grand feast was to begin. Mary thought she would stay awake all the time, but she had never pictured four hours like those she was really to live through. She had fancied herself and Rose, and Agnes, and Sophy, and above all things, Hannah, talking eagerly in little whispers, with bursts of laughter between. She had fancied their hearts getting more and more excited, and their minds more and more full of the grand, grand climax which awaited them. But everything was still, and soon Mary, as well as Rose, and Agnes, and Sophy slept; only Hannah stayed awake.

By and by the great clock in the stables struck twelve, and the smaller clocks in the house echoed the sound; and when the last note had died away, Hannah was the one to spring up on her pillow.

"It is twelve o'clock," she said, touching Mary.

Mary rose instantly; she put her feet upon the cold, smooth, polished floor of the old dormitory.

"It has come," she said, looking at Hannah.

"Yes," replied Hannah; "it has come."

"Our jolly, jolly, delightful feast," said Mary, "and you have given it to us, Hannah—you have given it to us."

"Get dressed and don't talk," said Hannah.

All the girls were up by this time; they put on their clothes softly, and without making the least sound. Miss

Dickinson's room was very near this dormitory. It was necessary that they should not awaken her.

Hannah was the first to be dressed. When she had finished her toilet she went straight up to the window and looked steadily and hard at the moon and stars; then she folded her hands together, and then she turned round and looked at her companions.

"I am ready when you are," she said.

"Oh, Hannah! you do talk in a grave voice," said Mary.

"I cannot imagine what has come to you."

"Look here," said Rose; "if you don't cheer up, Hannah Cardigan, when we get upstairs, you'll be a spoilsport, and that won't be at all to our liking."

Hannah said nothing.

"Don't worry her," said Mary; "perhaps she has a bit of a headache."

"No, I have not," said Hannah. "I'm quite well."

The girls stared at her. They could see her quite distinctly in the light of the moon. One and all, however, refrained from questioning her further. They went in a little body towards the door of the dormitory.

Rose opened the door, for she knew its trick. You had to open it swiftly, raising it slightly as you did so. In that way you quite prevented its creaking. The door was opened wide, and the five girls in their stockings—for they did not dare to put on their slippers—found themselves in the outside corridor. Here they were met by forty-five other girls. Great excitement was visible in every face; even Hannah felt hers flush up, and her heart beat quickly and suddenly with a great wild thud of fear when she saw the

forty-five fresh faces.

Nobody spoke, however; the moment was too intense—too much depended on it. Hannah began to think of the old feast of long ago, when Leonora's angel went away. She always said to herself that Leonora's angel went home that night; he could not stand Leonora's deceit. He had meant to live with her all her life, but she had disappointed him so sorely that he had gone to the home over there; and he had done it on that night ages back when there was another feast held in the old attic, and other girls had wilfully disobeyed and deceived their teachers.

Hannah seemed to think that a very little would send her angel aloft.

"And then no hope, no hope at all," thought the child; "but I'm going to do it; it will be awfully hard, but I'm going to do it."

They walked down the corridor in single file. They reached the baize door.

"Oh, delicious!—isn't it delicious?" said Rose, as they silently opened the door which had been previously oiled in every hinge in order to prevent a creak. "Isn't it delicious, Hannah?"

Hannah said nothing.

"She is a kill-joy," said Rose to herself. "I thought she would have been the fun of the whole thing—but oh, she is disappointing!"

The other girls, however, were too excited to notice Hannah; she was lost in the crowd. After all she had given the feast—but she was only a very small child, one of the younger members of the school. If Hannah did not

choose to be jolly they could enjoy themselves in spite of her. Rose rushed forward and joined another girl—a madcap sort of a creature of the name of Freda Ray.

“Let’s come on, Freda,” said Rose. “We’ll have rare fun when we get to the attic.”

All the girls mounted the stairs, and none of the stairs creaked. They knew so well where to place their feet. They entered the big attic which was not to be used, under which the senior school and the teachers slept; they entered the attic again under which Mrs. Marshal slept, and then at last they came to the fairy bower where the stolen feast was to be held.

If the feast had been lovely in the days of Leonora, the progress of time had enabled the girls to make improvements, and the feast which was celebrated in honor of Hannah was a far more beautiful and complicated affair. All the little candles, for instance, were surrounded by shades of colored paper, and a real cloth had been substituted for the newspapers; and there were tiny cups and saucers instead of tin mugs; and there was real tea in a real silver teapot. And there were sweets of every description, and little cakes, and all sorts of good things; and the moon shining in at the attic window, lay with a great beam of silver light across the table where the fairy feast was spread; and there were chairs or hassocks for each girl, and the whole place did look like the most wonderful fairyland.

Hannah clasped her hands, and a cry of admiration burst from her lips.

“We did it all,” said Rose, and Freda, and Mary. and

Sophy; "we arranged the feast; we have been up here, off and on, for the last two days. Now, Hannah, isn't it lovely? and this is your chair, Hannah. Come to the head of the table, Hannah; you are the queen. Isn't it lovely—isn't it lovely? We will have a nice feed first, and then we'll tell stories. That's what we generally do. We'd give anything to dance; we'd give anything to sing, but we mustn't. We'll tell stories; we'll tell ghost stories, and frighten ourselves awful. That's splendid; that's what we'll do."

"Yes, that's what we'll do," said a bevy of other girls who had clustered close. "Come, Hannah, you are the giver of the feast—you are the queen."

"And we all love you, Hannah, darling," said Mary.

"Yes, we all love her, of course," said Rose.

"She's the pet of the school," said Sophy.

"Yes, quite the pet of the school," said Mary. "You have not been here quite a week, little Hannah, and yet you are the pet of the school. Aren't you a lucky girl? Now come to your throne, come to your throne!"

"Stop!" said Hannah abruptly. The moment had come. She felt a wild lunge at her heart. For an instant it almost stopped beating, then it flew forward more violently than ever.

"I want to say something," said Hannah. "I won't be the pet of the school any more; I know that, but I don't care. I don't care nothing for none of you; I don't care for nobody. I've got to choose, and I has chose."

"Oh, don't talk in that strain now," said Mary. "Come along, Hannah; you can tell us all those queer thoughts

of yours to-morrow. Come, now, and take your seat. Isn't it snug? See, it is such a pretty little old armchair, and we put this bit of crimson bunting over it, and it does look gay. Come, Hannah, come!"

"No," said Hannah. She stepped back and pushed Mary away. "I cannot sit on that throne," she said, "and I cannot, cannot eat any of those things. I, girls—I have made up my mind."

"To do what?" said the girls. The earnestness in Hannah's voice had at last penetrated through all their frivolity. Eyes which had been full of laughter became suddenly grave, and lips which had been wreathed in the gayest of smiles became cold and stern, or angry and defiant.

"What is it, Hannah? Speak up!" said Rose.

"I will," said Hannah. "I am going to do this. We ought not to have this feast; we ought none of us to have it. It is very wrong, and I'm going to tell Mrs. Marshal."

There was silence for a moment, a dead silence which might almost be felt. Then Rose laughed—she gave a very satirical, harsh little laugh.

"I think you must be out of your mind," she said. "What do you mean?"

"No, I'm not out of my mind," said Hannah. "I was out of my mind when I said I'd do it, but I'm in it now. I'm going down to tell Mrs. Marshal. I'm going to tell her everything, everything; and when she knows all, if she is willing to forgive us, she can come and join us, but if she won't come, why, she'll punish us."

"And you mean to say, little sneak," said Rose—"you

mean to say that you are going down to tell on us, on all your schoolfellows, all the members of the junior school? You mean it—you mean it?"

"Yes, I mean it," said Hannah; "I quite mean it."

"But do you know what you are?—about the meanest little cad that ever walked the earth! Do you think we'll allow it for a moment?"

"I'm not going to ask you," said Hannah. "I did wrong, and now I'm doing right. It's awful hard to do right; but hard don't matter, now. It's all right—I have chose the good."

The girls all burst into a loud laugh of ridicule.

"The good?" they said. "We'll none of us ever speak to you again, that's what this means; and do you suppose for an instant we are going to allow it?"

"You cannot prevent me," said Hannah; "for if you do, I'll scream out as loud as ever I can, and I can shriek, I can tell you—yes, I can!"

Hannah looked very defiant, and, as she spoke, she ran to the door of the attic. The others pursued her, but she was first. She ran past the attic under which Mrs. Marshal slept; she rushed over the attic under which the senior school slept. When she got to the door of the final attic she turned and faced the girls. They were after her now like wolves after their prey, but Hannah could turn and show fight.

"You are the meanest cad! Oh, Hannah, Hannah, Hannah!" said Mary Cholmondeley. "Hannah, I was always your friend—don't, don't, don't! To expose us all—oh, Hannah, you cannot!"

"I will," said Hannah. "I will tell on you all, and on all the senior school—Leonora and the rest. Why should the angels go away because of all of us? You are wicked, and I am wicked; but I'm going to tell—I'm going to tell!"

The girls shrieked out in their excitement; they had never been so taken aback before. Hannah rushed down the attic stairs; she pushed open the baize door, and was first on the landing. The girls trooped after her.

To reach Mrs. Marshal's room she had to run down another flight of stairs, and this flight was steep and the stairs were slippery, for they were made of old oak. As Hannah ran she slipped; the next moment she had fallen. She lay prone on the stairs, and a number of girls tumbled over her. They hurt her as she lay, but they did not care; they were all wild. Absolute hatred, the hatred of Cain, almost filled their breasts. Hannah was the most treacherous girl who had ever come to the school. Prudence was forgotten, noise became the order of the hour—noise, and riot, and recriminating voices, and angry tones—and Hannah's name was passed from mouth to mouth.

Hannah sat up presently on the stairs. Her forehead was cut and was bleeding, and the blood poured down her face. She felt slightly stunned, but all the time her heart was singing. She had done right. It had been awfully difficult, but she had chosen the good, and she did not care, she did not care.

At that moment the thing that was sure to happen did happen, and Mrs. Marshal and Miss Dickinson and one or two more of the teachers, all attired picturesquely in

their different dressing-gowns, appeared on the scene. Mrs. Marshal's face was seen as she walked upstairs, and Miss Dickinson's white face in her dark-red dressing-gown as she peeped round the corner.

The girls in the senior school, however, did not stir, for they guessed that something had happened, and felt with the remembrance of other feasts deep in their hearts, that they had better take no notice; but the teachers congregated round the excited girls, and in especial round Hannah, who was sitting on the stairs with the blood pouring down her face.

"What is the matter?" said Mrs. Marshal. "What are you all doing, girls, every one of you dressed, and—what does this mean? I am extremely displeased. What is wrong?"

"You had better ask Hannah Cardigan," said Mary Cholmondeley, in a sulky voice.

Mary was the very last to forsake Hannah, but she did forsake her now; she felt she was not worth thinking about, and that the sooner she got rid of such an objectionable friend the better.

Hannah was feeling stunned, and did not speak at once.

"You had better ask her," said one girl after another; and the voices of all the girls were sulky, for they all felt deeply injured, irreparably ruined by wicked little Hannah.

"What is it, Hannah?" said Mrs. Marshal.

"I was coming to tell you, when I fell," said Hannah.

"But why were you coming to me? And why were you not in bed?"

"'Cos I was wicked," said Hannah.

"You were wicked? What about? I am inclined to be extremely angry. What does all this mean?"

"I did what the others did," said Hannah. She raised her arm with a comprehensive sweep, which seemed to embrace the whole of the forty-nine girls who were crowded round her. "We all did it. We was all bad; p'r'aps I was the worst, 'cos I gived the money. We was having a feast in the attic. We knew it was wrong, but we liked it all the more 'cos of that. I wanted awfully to be bad, but I couldn't go on just at the very end, so I thought I'd tell you. They hate me; they're bad. We are all bad together, but we had best be punished now, 'cos then perhaps our angels won't go away."

"The little hypocrite! the little horror!" whispered several girls under their breath.

"I must get to the meaning of this," said Mrs. Marshal. "A feast in the attic—a stolen feast! What does it mean? Sophy, you are the oldest girl in the junior school. What does it mean?"

"It means this," said Sophy. "We have always from time to time had feasts in the attic. The senior school had the feasts when they were juniors, and now we in our turn have it, and none of the teachers ever knew. It has gone on for years and years, nearly a hundred years, I expect. It was one of the hidden rules of the school, and Hannah is the one to break the charm, and we all hate her. You must expel her, please, Mrs. Marshal, for we never could live in the school with such a wicked, wicked girl again."

"Come with me, Hannah," said Mrs. Marshal, very gravely. She took Hannah's hand. Hannah rose feebly to her feet. She was feeling giddy and sick, for the cut on her forehead was a rather deep one.

"Where are you taking me?" said Hannah.

"Upstairs, to the attic where the feast was held."

Mrs. Marshal turned round, and leading Hannah, went upstairs. None of the other girls followed, but Miss Dickinson and the French governess went upstairs, behind Hannah and Mrs. Marshal.

They went straight into the room where the feast was to be held. They saw the little chair with the red drapery where Hannah was to sit; they took in everything. Then Mrs. Marshal turned round and looked at Hannah.

"When did you make up your mind to tell me?" she said.

"After you had sung the 'Home over There.'"

"I understand," said Mrs. Marshal very briefly. She sat down and looked at Hannah, then she kissed her on her white lips.

"You shall come and sleep in my room to-night," she said, "and I will bathe your forehead."

CHAPTER XXVI.

HANNAH'S ANGEL.

The next day Hannah was ill. She had a bad headache, and could not get up. The doctor was sent for. He said the child was in a state of great mental excitement. Mrs. Marshal told him all that had taken place the night before. She had questioned the girls in the meantime, and had got to the bottom of the mystery. When she told the story he smiled, and then he said slowly:

"It was a brave thing to do."

"It was," said Mrs. Marshal. "It was about the pluckiest thing I ever heard of a small child doing; but Hannah will never be liked at Cumnor West, and I must ask her mother to remove her. Her old friend Margaret North was coming here as teacher, but I shall ask Mrs. Cardigan to take Hannah away from the school, and send her with Margaret North to some place where they can be quite alone for a year. At the end of that time Hannah may come back. I am not quite sure. I feel puzzled at present. I only know that she dare not live at Cumnor West now."

"It is a pity," said the doctor, "but schoolgirls can be very hard and cruel when they like, and she has doubtless done that which no schoolgirl can forgive."

That evening Margaret North arrived. She had been

telegraphed for by Mrs. Marshal. When she saw Hannah she took her in her arms and kissed her.

"Your angel will never go away now, Hannah," she said, and then Hannah smiled and felt that it was all worth while.

A day or two afterwards she and Margaret left Cumnor West. No girl bade Hannah good-by. The idol of the hour had been only the idol of the hour, and her brief reign was over. She is spoken of now at Cumnor West with bated breath as "Bad Little Hannah," quite the worst and most terrible girl who ever came to the school.



